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WOMAN'S FIGHT
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WOMEN'S FIGHT FOR THE VOTE

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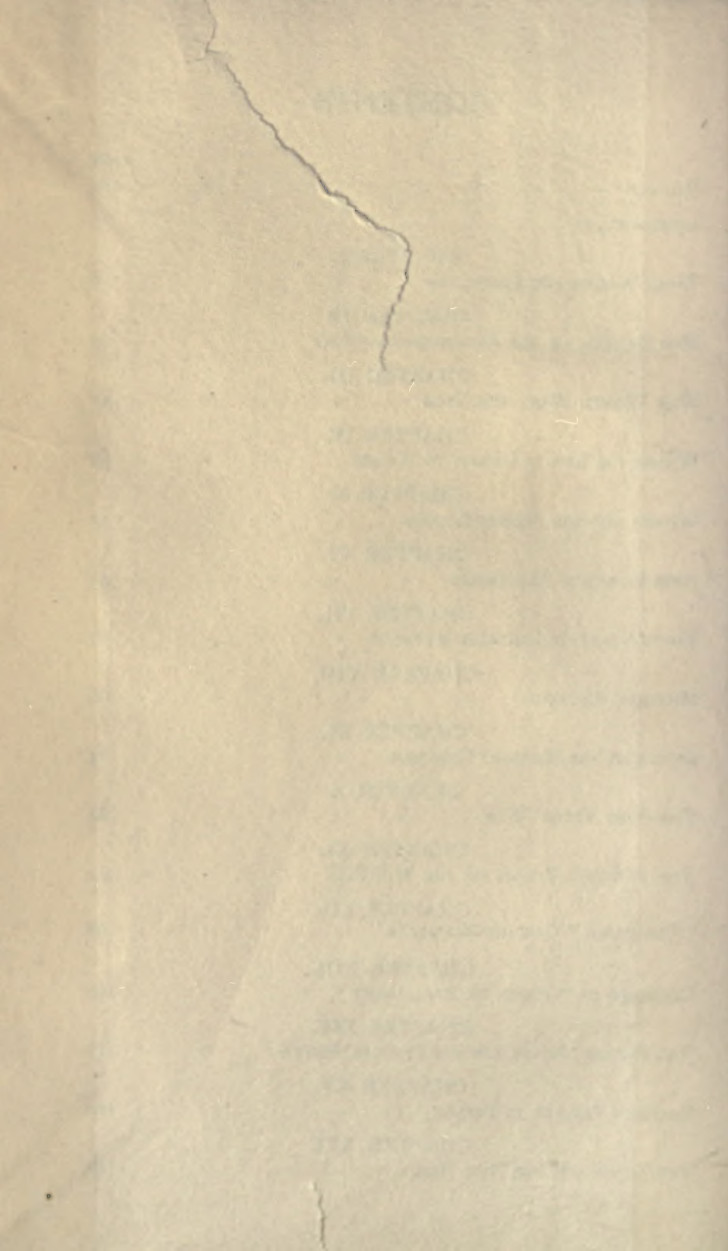
FREDERICK W. PETHICK LAWRENCE



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PREFACE

As a chronicler of a campaign which is still in progress I labour under a certain disadvantage as to tenses. The "may be" of to-day becomes the "was" or the "might have been" of to-morrow. Even while the ink is still wet in the printing press events are happening which are deciding whether a new chapter of militancy is to be written or whether the book should have the orthodox ending—"and they all lived happily ever after." Those who read this book a year, a month, or even a day, after it is published are asked to bear this salient fact in mind.

F. W. PETHICK LAWRENCE.

4, CLEMENT'S INN, W.C.

June 9th, 1910.

PREFACE

In a country where the press is so free, it is not surprising that the progress of literature should be so rapid. The "new" is every day becoming "old," and the "old" every day becoming "new." It is not, therefore, surprising that the public should be so anxious to know what is going on in the world of letters. It is not, therefore, surprising that the public should be so anxious to know what is going on in the world of letters. It is not, therefore, surprising that the public should be so anxious to know what is going on in the world of letters.

J. W. BENTLEY, LONDON.

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WOMEN'S FIGHT FOR THE VOTE.

BY FREDERICK W. PETHICK LAWRENCE.

INTRODUCTION.

WOMAN SUFFRAGE has been for such a long time under discussion that one is sometimes tempted to assume that everyone knows all that there is to be said about it, and that the time for argument is in reality past, and the time for action come.

There is a sense in which this is true. It is true that the question has been argued about by politicians for so long a time without anything being done that any further argument without action is a mere waste of time.

But it is not true that in consequence of this need

for action argument is no longer necessary. On the contrary, argument is required more than ever before, because while it is still necessary to explain to people the fundamental principles of the demand for Votes for Women, it has become also necessary to explain the action which has been taken to enforce this demand.

The Women's Social and Political Union, since the commencement of militant methods of agitation in 1905, have carried on the double work of fighting and educating simultaneously. They have had to fight, as the warriors did of old, with the sword in one hand and the trowel in the other. Or, to change the metaphor, while the fundamental business of the Union has been a direct attack upon the Government of the day who have been the obstacle to the enfranchisement of women, yet, at the same time, they have had to fight a rear-guard action against the straggling hosts which are still opposed to the principles of Woman Suffrage.

Of these opponents some have adopted the direct and honest method of frank hostility, and others have preferred the dishonest policy of professing friendship while in secret they do not hesitate to use every means in their power to block, to sidetrack, and, if possible, to prevent the enfranchisement of women.

The Anti-Suffragists.

Among the direct opponents, the most interesting are those who have banded themselves into Anti-Suffrage Societies and have accordingly been forced to try and formulate arguments to support the faith that is in them. The weakness of these arguments and their mutually inconsistent character have already done good spadework in favour of Woman Suffrage. It is said that during the South African War the Boers expressed themselves as glad of the presence on the British side of a certain class of untrained volunteers, because they presented an easy prey, and when captured provided additional stores of ammunition to their captors. The Anti-Suffragists are of even more assistance in furthering the cause of Woman Suffrage, because they provide their enemies with a store not only of ammunition, but also of *personnel*. In fact, they prove excellent recruiting sergeants, introducing the subject into quarters where it would otherwise be taboo and ultimately bringing into the ranks of the Women's Social and Political Union many recruits who, but for this opposition, would never have become acquainted with the movement. The opposition is, in fact, parallel to that which is described in Molesworth's History.

Speaking of a Society which was formed to oppose the Anti-Corn Law League, he says: "This association was rather a help than a hindrance to the work of the league. By promoting discussion it drew attention to the arguments of Free Traders and thus hastened the spread and prevalence of the truth."

False Friends.

Prominent among the other section of opponents must be reckoned those members of Parliament, who, in order to obtain the devoted service of women to win them their seats, did lip-homage to Woman Suffrage, confident that once elected they could so manipulate the complicated procedure of the House of Commons that their faithlessness would not be detected. These men were rendered angry when confronted by the one test which separates sincerity from insincerity—the test of action.

The Indifferent.

Finally, there are the people who, while not unfavourable to Woman Suffrage, regard the question with comparative indifference. Many of them are conscious that the conditions in which

large numbers of women have to live to-day are deplorable; they feel that they would be prepared to do anything which would improve these conditions, yet they do not understand that the first step towards this end is the enfranchisement of women. They have never taken the trouble to inquire into the nature of the demand women are making to-day, nor have they followed the steps commencing with long years of patient constitutional agitation which have led up to the present vigorous methods of the modern Suffragette.

In response to a very large demand, I have decided to restate the elementary facts concerning Woman Suffrage. Subsequent chapters will cover the nature and reason of women's demand for the vote, the absurdity and inconsistency of the arguments of the Anti-Suffragists, and a restatement of the successive stages of the agitation, with an explanation and defence of the militant methods adopted by the Women's Social and Political Union.

CHAPTER I.

WHAT WOMEN ARE ASKING FOR.

Under the existing law men, in order to possess the franchise, have to qualify in one or other of the following capacities:—(1) Occupiers; (2) Owners; (3) Lodgers; (4) University graduates.

(1) Occupiers are divided into two classes:—householders (technically known as inhabitant occupiers) and occupiers who are not householders.

Householders are those who actually dwell in a house or part of a house which they either own or rent. There is no limit of value, so however small a rent be paid or however small a part of the house be occupied, even only a single room, provided the terms on which it is rented give him entire control over it, a man householder can claim the franchise. The payment of rates is necessary for this franchise, though the rates need not be paid by the tenant direct but may be paid by the landlord. Among the householders are included those who live in a house provided for them by their

employer, even though they do not actually pay any rent for it because it forms part of their wages; these are generally referred to as possessing the service franchise.

Occupiers other than householders are those who occupy lands, farms, offices, shops, and other buildings otherwise than for residence. In their case the occupied premises must be of the clear yearly value of at least £10.

In Boroughs any number of persons may be joint occupiers (of either class) but the value of the premises occupied must be such as to give £10 (or more) for each occupier claiming the franchise. In Counties not more than two persons may claim the vote as joint occupiers for the same premises unless they shall have derived the same by descent, succession, marriage, marriage settlement, or unless they shall be *bonâ fide* engaged as partners carrying on trade or business. (This proviso is obviously directed against the manufacture of votes by a number of people joining to take a farm for the purpose of obtaining them.)

(2) Owners, in order to obtain a vote, must be possessed of freehold estate in a County constituency valued at not less than £5 per annum, or of a leasehold (if in actual occupation) of a term originally created for not less than sixty years, of

the value of £5 per annum or not less than twenty years of the value of £50 per annum.

(3) Lodgers in order to obtain a vote must occupy apartments of the value of not less than 3s. 10d. a week. (The apartments may be let furnished or unfurnished, but in either case the minimum rental of 3s. 10d. a week, *i.e.*, £10 a year, is reckoned on the unfurnished value.)

(4) University graduates are those who have graduated in the Universities of Oxford, Cambridge, London, Dublin, Edinburgh, St. Andrew's, Glasgow, or Aberdeen, and their votes are for special Members of Parliament who represent these Universities.

It should be noted that the distinction between inhabitant occupiers of part of a house and lodgers is a very narrow one, and depends on the degree of control which the tenant possesses over his apartments.

Further it should be noted that class (1), (occupiers), is by far the largest, accounting for about 90 per cent. of the total, while all the other classes together only account for about 10 per cent.

The demand which women are making is simply and solely that sex shall not of itself be a disqualification for the possession of the Parliamentary Franchise.

As it has been decided in the Courts of Law* that no woman in the United Kingdom is entitled to vote in Parliamentary elections under the existing law, in order that women may obtain this right, a statute must be passed specifically conferring it upon them. Women suffragists have accordingly drafted a Bill which they desire to see carried into law. It is known as the Women's Enfranchisement Bill, and reads as follows:—

That in all Acts relating to the qualification and registration of voters or persons entitled or claiming to be registered and to vote in the election of members of Parliament, wherever words occur which import the masculine gender the same shall be held to include women for all purposes connected with and having reference to the right to be registered as voters, and to vote in such election, any law or usage to the contrary notwithstanding.

The effect of the passage of this Bill would be *immediately* to confer the franchise upon all those women who possess the qualifications which at present entitle men to vote, and *subsequently* to secure that if any extension be made in the franchise law it should affect men and women alike.

The immediate effect would be to enfranchise a little over a million women, either householders,

* *Chorlton v. Lings*, Court of Common Pleas, 1867 (see *Law Reports, Court of Common Pleas*, vol. iv.), *Scottish Graduates Case*, House of Lords, 1908. (see "*Report of the Scottish Women Graduates Appeal in the House of Lords.*" London: Athenæum Press. Price 3d.)

occupiers, owners, lodgers, or University graduates. As the number of men electors are about seven-and-a-half million this would mean that the women electors would be about one-seventh of the whole.

The New Bill.

This is the women's demand; but at the time of going to press (June, 1910) another Bill is being brought forward in Parliament by a committee of Members of Parliament which differs from the Women's Enfranchisement Bill in that instead of directly removing the sex barrier it proposes specifically to enfranchise women householders and occupiers.

From a comparison of the facts given above with regard to the existing male franchise, it will be seen that the women enfranchised under this new Bill, though only forming one out of the four classes who would obtain the vote under the Women's Enfranchisement Bill, are nevertheless far the largest class, being, in fact, several times more numerous than all the other three classes together (in the case of men nine times as numerous). Their number would be roughly about a million, or about one-eighth of the whole electorate. Taking

this into account the Women's Social and Political Union, though regarding no Bill as final which does not establish the principle of sex equality in the matter of the franchise, gives its cordial support to the new Bill as an instalment of the demands of women. This Bill is considered further in Chapter XVI.

CHAPTER II.

THE MEANING OF THE PARLIAMENTARY VOTE.

The right to put a cross on a ballot paper once in every four or five years. In some such words as these the possession of the Parliamentary vote is often described. Is the description accurate? Yes, if only the actual method of exercising the right is considered; no, if this particular formality is regarded as the begin-all and end-all of the matter. For the cross on the ballot paper is a symbol of power; it is the means selected to enable the voter to make his will felt in the government of the country.

In these days of complicated civilisation we are fully accustomed to employ symbolic acts trifling in themselves to affect large issues. In the commercial world many a man at the outset of his life has ruined his whole future by an injudicious "backing of a bill." A king, by a stroke of the pen, can consign a man to death or grant him a free pardon. The gift of a ring to a woman before

the recognised authority is the symbol chosen by the law to bind man and woman together as husband and wife "till death them do part."

In precisely the same way the cross on the ballot paper is a symbolic act of citizenship. It is the means recognised by the law whereby the voter exercises his sovereign rights as one of the rulers of the country. Its immediate effect is to enable the voter to influence the selection of the man who is to represent his district in the House of Commons. That representative, when selected, will, in a similar way, be called on to bring his influence to bear in Parliament. In the first place, he is the spokesman for that district in the House of Commons. He has a special duty with regard to any Bills which affect that district. He can bring to light any grievances affecting individuals in the district by interrogating Ministers thereon. He can use his personal influence to get local trade disputes and other matters settled satisfactorily. In the second place, he takes his share in deciding how the national taxes shall be levied and how they shall be spent. In the third place, he takes his share in deciding what new national legislation shall be carried and what old laws shall be repealed. In the fourth place, he takes his share in deciding what persons shall form the government of the country,

how they shall administer the laws, and what shall be the relation of the country to foreign powers and dependencies.

Control of the Administration.

All these four powers which the electors exercise through their Parliamentary representatives are distinct. In our own history they have been acquired at different times, while in many other countries the electors still possess some only and not all of them. Particular attention should be directed to the last—the power of controlling the administration—for though this is one of the most important, yet in the discussion of woman suffrage it is not infrequently forgotten. The administration of the country is still to-day *nominally*, as it once was *actually*, in the hands of the Sovereign. In strict parlance, it is the King who chooses the Prime Minister, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, the Home Secretary, and the other Ministers of State. It is the King who appoints the Viceroy of India, the Governor-General, etc. It is in the King's name that treaties are made with foreign powers. It is in the King's name that the internal administration of the country is carried on. But actually the voters' representatives in the

House of Commons decide these matters to-day. The long struggle with the Stuarts and the steady activity of Parliament in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries have left the Sovereign but the shadow of administrative power. To-day the King *must* select his Prime Minister from among that political party which commands a majority in the House of Commons, and practically he is bound to select that member of the party who is recognised as its leader. It is then the Prime Minister, and not the King, who selects the other Ministers, the Viceroys and Governors, and who determines the treaties with foreign powers.

But the control of the electors over the administration is not confined to this initial choice. Every one of the King's Ministers, in carrying out his administrative duties, is liable not only to be interrogated in the Commons, but to a direct vote of censure should his actions be displeasing to a majority of members, and this vote of censure would necessitate immediate dismissal from office. The fact that these votes of censure are rarely, if ever, carried does not make the potentiality of carrying them of less importance, because what really takes place is that the Minister, anxious to avoid censure, takes care to bring his conduct into line with the feeling in the House of Commons

before a crisis is reached. How important this control over the administration is will be realised by considering the nature of the duties which the King's Ministers have to perform. It will then be seen how vitally they affect the lives and liberties of the people of the country. Thus the President of the Board of Trade is entitled to make regulations which affect the conditions of labour; he also has wide discretionary powers of arbitration in trade disputes. The President of the Local Government Board exercises a marked influence on the policy of local bodies—notably in such questions as housing, the Poor Law, the appointment of teachers, etc., etc. The Home Secretary has wide powers of regulation under the Factory Acts; he controls the prisons; he exercises the King's prerogative of pardon; he is the head of the metropolitan police. Finally, every Department of State is a business in itself (the War Office, the Admiralty, the Post Office count their employees by hundreds of thousands), and the Minister in charge is an employer of labour, with special powers over his employees; the conditions of labour which prevail in these departments, and the regulations to which sub-contractors have to conform, not merely affect directly the lives of an enormous number of workers, but indirectly in a

large measure set the standard by which other employers are guided.

The Individual Voter.

It is quite likely that many readers who have followed so far the argument as to the power which the possession of the vote confers have done so with a certain mental reservation; they have no hole to pick in the theory, but they feel that it does not work out in this way in practice. Their objection may best be expressed by being put into the mouth of a certain John Smith, independent elector for the borough of X———.

“It may be true,” he says, “in theory that when I cast my vote into the ballot-box I take my share in governing the country, selecting the taxes, making the laws, etc. In reality I do nothing of the kind. I am just one out of 10,378 electors on the register for X———. Out of the five elections which have taken place while I have been on the register, once there was no contest, and on the other four occasions the successful candidate was returned by majorities ranging from 200 to 1,500, so that my vote has never affected the result in any conceivable way. Even if it had done so, and by an extraordinary coincidence I

had exercised the casting vote and put in Mr. Jones instead of Mr. Robinson, the change in the House of Commons would have been negligible. It probably would not have altered the policy of the Government one iota. No! The importance of having the vote is a very fine theory, but it doesn't work out in practice, simply because I am only one out of seven or eight million men who have the vote. My vote has given me nothing. I should lose nothing if I did not exercise it, or even if it was taken away altogether."

From a practical point of view, John is quite right so far. If he failed to use his vote, or by some accident was deprived of it, it would make precious little difference. But John generally does not stop there; having made out a triumphant case, he proceeds to draw a deduction from it. The vote being useless to him, he argues, it would be similarly useless to women. Or if he lives in Prussia to-day he is probably asking why the working people are making all this fuss and endangering their lives in encounters with the police all about nothing but the vote.

The answer is that though John was all right in his premiss, he is all wrong in his deduction. *Though it makes little or no difference whether one individual has or has not the franchise, it*

makes all the difference whether a whole class of individuals possesses the franchise or is excluded from it. What one single John Smith was unable to do a whole class of John Smiths not only can, but will do.

Suppose John is a trade unionist, then he knows that at the General Election of 1906 he and his fellow trade unionists not merely secured the return of thirty Labour Members to Parliament, but also in almost every constituency throughout the country obtained from Liberal candidates (on pain of losing votes) a pledge to secure the reversal by law of the Taff Vale decision; and as soon as Parliament met this law was passed. Does he think that if not merely he, but every other trade unionist, had been disfranchised, such a result would have taken place? Or if the franchise had never been extended below the middle classes, does he suppose that the Workmen's Compensation Act, Old Age Pensions, the present Budget, or a hundred other measures, would ever have been introduced, let alone carried into law? Or, in the realm of administration, does he not recognise that it is because working *men* have votes that they have secured a certain standard of wages for men working in the Woolwich Arsenal, and for *men* (*not women*) employed by the sub-contractors?

Lastly, let him ask himself why the Outlanders in the Transvaal made such a determined demand for voting rights, and why white men (both English and Dutch) in that country to-day refuse to enfranchise the Kaffir population.

From these illustrations he will become convinced, to whatever section of society he may belong, that though he may profit little by his own individual vote, he profits enormously by the fact that his class or his section of society are voters. ~~It gives to the members of his class a share in dictating the policy of the nation. It gives them a share in making such laws and decreeing such taxes as they think are good for the country and for themselves. It secures them the power to protect their own interests under the administration. And, finally, it gives to every one of them as one of the ultimate rulers of the country a status as a citizen which he could not otherwise obtain.~~

Why women needs to vote

CHAPTER III.

WHY WOMEN WANT THE VOTE.

Women want the vote for two essential reasons : firstly, in order that they may play their part in the life of the nation and introduce their point of view, so long neglected, into the government of the country; and, secondly, in order that the interests of women may be safeguarded.

Women, it has been well said, "excel in the care of all living things." Women represent the human point of view. It was a woman (Florence Nightingale) who revolutionised the care of the sick upon the battlefield. It was a woman (Elizabeth Fry) who was responsible for bringing into our mediæval prison system such traces of humanity as it possesses to-day. It was a woman (Harriet Beecher Stowe) who, by her writing, contributed so largely to the abolition of slavery in the continent of America.

For men to imagine that they can get on better in the government and administration of the

country without taking counsel of women, is an assumption equally arrogant and ridiculous with that of a father who should exclude the mother from any influence in the home or in the care of her infant children.

Consider the nature of some of the questions to be decided in Parliament. On whose shoulders shall the taxes be laid? Shall they be on bread, on meat, on tea, on tobacco, on large incomes, on licences, and if so, in what proportion? What subjects shall be taught to the children at school? Till what age should they stay there? What steps are to be taken to check the terrible evil of infant mortality? What is to be done in order to restore to the ranks of self-supporting citizens those who have failed to stand alone in our complex modern civilisation? How can those be reclaimed who have gone right under and committed crime? Should married women be prohibited from leaving their homes and going out into the world to work? How should the conditions of industry be regulated? What sort of homes are to be built for the people of the country? How are the lives of little children to be preserved from danger?

These and a multitude of other questions intimately affecting the lives of the men, women, and children of the nation men have been trying

to settle alone. That in many directions their efforts have been met with conspicuous failure is a commonplace. Large sections of our population live in abject poverty; men and women—particularly women—are so terribly sweated that they earn only a few shillings a week in return for almost ceaseless toil; infant mortality is appalling; the housing evil grows steadily worse; the Poor Law is in need of drastic reform; our prisons are a manufactory of criminals.

Women feel deeply on all these questions, and when they are voters candidates of all political parties will find that in order to win their support at the polls they will have to set these questions in the forefront of their programmes. Those that are returned to Parliament will find that women will watch carefully their actions and those of the party to which they belong, and unless action follows upon promise they will lose their seats. To-day, because women are voteless, these questions are neglected.

Safeguarding the Interests of Women.

No human being is good enough to be entrusted with absolute power over another human being, and no section or class of a community is good enough to be entrusted with absolute power over

another section or class. At present the male electorate has the sole power to make the laws which affect the women of the country, and in consequence it has made many laws which are strongly resented by women and many laws which differentiate between men and women, to the disadvantage of the latter. Furthermore, the male electorate is also the virtual controller of the administration, and it has so administered the laws as to exclude women from all important positions, not merely to the disadvantage of women, but to the detriment of the community, which has been thereby deprived of the service of many most capable public servants. The more this statement is analysed and the more the difference in the treatment of men and women by the laws and by the administration is investigated the more clearly will be demonstrated the necessity for women to possess the vote. I propose, therefore, to devote two whole chapters to a consideration of these matters in greater detail, devoting the remainder of this chapter to another aspect of the same question.

The Status of Citizenship.

In addition to the direct power which the vote gives, it carries with it a certain moral power which

affects the state of mind both of the voter himself and of others in their attitude towards him. The vote is the hall-mark of citizenship, and confers a status which those who are excluded from it cannot possess. Before working men possessed the vote they were openly spoken about in terms of contempt which would never be applied to them to-day. To be classed with the unfit—the criminals, the paupers, the lunatics—conveys to the popular mind a measure of inferiority. How does this work out in practice in the case of women to-day?

One of the most extraordinary myths of our modern civilisation is the pretence that women are regarded with special veneration and respect. The exact converse is the case. Throughout the whole relationship of the sexes a sense of masculine superiority is assumed, consciously or unconsciously, by the man, and is accepted by the woman either because she has been taught to think it true, or because she believes that only on these terms is any social life open to her at all. Among the upper classes the veneration of honour and deference paid to women represents no doubt in some cases a genuine feeling of respect, but only too often it is merely skin deep. Follow the young man whose politeness you have been admiring to his club and listen to his

conversation there upon the women of his acquaintance. You will not find his politeness reflected in his words, or in those of his associates; woman has come down off her pedestal and become the butt of his sarcasm and the object of his jest. Among the lower classes, less used to disguising their thoughts, the naked truth is more apparent. The women of the household are frankly the servants of the men; their purpose is entirely secondary, and they are not expected to meddle in matters outside the immediate control of the house. Of course, there are exceptions to this state of things, but the exceptions are few and far between.

Those who do not trace the inferior position of women in all these matters to their unenfranchised condition look in vain for a reason. The vast majority of qualities are common to both sexes of the human race; and where women differ from men in natural gifts, the difference is not one between greater and less, but between two equals of different kinds. It is the fact that she belongs to the unenfranchised sex which renders a woman's opinion in the eyes of husband or son of less importance than it otherwise would be, for he assumes, in common with the law-makers and with the anti-Suffragists, that she is not enfranchised because she is inferior. The employers, too, especially when

they are politically minded, find it worth while to conciliate their male operatives, while they can afford to treat with indifference the wishes of their women hands. Upon the women themselves the lack of the vote acts directly. It weakens their power of combination and lessens their self-reliance, and makes them more ready to accept the position in which they find themselves.

Already the vigorous fight which women are making to win the vote and so secure the recognition of their citizenship is having a marked effect both on the women themselves who are fighting and on those men who understand the meaning of the struggle. But the present inferiority of their status, with all that it implies, will not disappear till victory is obtained and the vote is won.

CHAPTER IV.

WHERE THE LAW IS UNJUST TO WOMEN.

“ Women have no grievances under the law. On the contrary, they are particularly favoured. If any real grievances could be proved there might be some show of reason for demanding the Parliamentary vote.”

In some such words as these opponents of woman suffrage are accustomed airily to dismiss the whole question of the differential treatment of the sexes before the law. The only flaw in their statement is that it does not rest upon actual fact, but upon a purely imaginary basis which ignorance and prejudice have combined to construct! Instead of being “ favoured ” by the law and having no “ grievances,” women are handicapped and treated as inferior at every turn. So many are the disadvantages under which they labour that it is impossible in a short account even to mention them all; a few of the more striking examples must suffice.

As a single woman she is treated differently from the single man. If her parents are wealthy and die intestate, she finds her claims to landed property postponed to those of her male relatives. If she is a working woman, she finds that certain occupations are legally closed to her, and that others are hedged about with restrictions. There is not space here to deal at length with the factory laws, nor to show how, under the guise of "protection," they are often the means of handicapping women in their struggle to earn a livelihood. It is sufficient to notice that while the lowest sweated industries are open to women, many of the better paid employments are reserved by law exclusively for men.

As Wife and Mother.

It is, however, when she becomes a wife and mother that the principal inequalities of the law come into her life. Those who oppose the granting of the franchise to women are the loudest in their claims that the place of women is in the home, yet it is precisely in the home that the rights of the man are by law entirely superior to those of the woman. The husband has the power to select where the home shall be and how it shall be conducted. In the eyes of the law he is the sole

parent* of the child so long as he is alive, and the decision as to the child's upbringing rests entirely with him. Whether the husband be good or bad, the wife is by law entirely subservient to him, and in the event of either party to the marriage being guilty of definite immorality there is a total difference in the treatment accorded to husband and wife. These are the general principles which underlie the position of the married woman, and the case for the reform of the law is not in any way lessened by the fact that many husbands—the great majority—are far better to their wives than the law compels them to be. Because most men are honest we do not on that account neglect to have laws relating to stealing. Laws are made for the bad and not for the good, who are far better than the law.

Consider the facts relating to the legal position of the wife a little more in detail. When a man and woman of the working class marry they have probably up to that time both been earning an independent livelihood. After marriage it is usual, except in certain cases, to have a division of labour; the husband undertakes the external work and the earning of money wages, and the woman undertakes the internal economy of the home and the

* That is if the child is born in wedlock. If the child is born out of wedlock the sole parent is the mother.

care of the children. The husband does not pay the wife wages for her share of the work, but he is supposed to hand over to her a large part of the money wages which he earns, for the house-keeping; but, although this is actually the case with the bulk of good husbands, the law does not insist upon this position. The wife has no legal right to any share of the husband's income except in the case of actual desertion; and if, while continuing to live with her, he refuses to pay to her a single penny of his wages, she cannot obtain such payment except by breaking up her home and going into the work-house. Short of this she and her children can starve, and yet she cannot claim the protection of the law to obtain maintenance from her husband.

Not only so, but even where the husband has paid over to his wife a certain sum of money for housekeeping purposes, and the house has been well kept, and the wife has saved a small sum out of the money, a recent decision in the Law Courts* has pronounced that this money is still the property of the husband, and cannot be claimed by the wife.

Prior to the passing of the Married Women's Property Acts the position was still worse, because the husband could then claim, in addition to his

* 1907, ⁶Burkett v. Burkett, 24 *Times* Law Report, 284.

own money, all the money which the wife brought to him as her separate property, or even earned by the exertions of her own labour. These additional injustices were abolished by the Married Women's Property Acts, carried in 1870 and 1882, largely as a result of the last great franchise agitation.

A brief reference is necessary here to the liability of the husband for his wife's debts incurred by her while living with him for necessaries ordered at tradesmen's houses, a liability which is not shared by a rich wife for the purchases of her husband. Is not this, it is frequently asked, a proof of how partial the law is to women? The position, however, is not what is generally supposed. The law is not a protection for the wife but for the creditor, who would otherwise be frequently defrauded by collusion between husband and wife. The creditor is entitled to assume (so the law says) that the wife, in ordering goods, is doing so as the agent of her husband. The proof that no special protection for the wife is intended lies in the fact that the husband can evade all responsibility in the matter by announcing beforehand to all tradesmen in the neighbourhood his intention of taking this course.

Not a Parent.

There is a common idea that in the upbringing

of the children the father has a right to determine that of the sons and the mother that of the daughters. This idea prevails because it is a practice sometimes agreed upon beforehand by persons of different religious opinions in contracting marriage, but the law does not support any such views. The mother has no more right by law to decide upon the education of her daughters than she has of her sons. If it is a case of vaccination, with regard to which the *parent* has the right to claim exemption, magistrates have definitely refused to recognise the mother as a *parent* where the father is still alive. In the Education Bills brought in by the Liberal Government during the Parliament of 1906-9 there were clauses granting to the *parent* the power to decide upon the kind of religion which the children should be taught. In this case, also, whether the child were son or daughter, the father, if he were alive, was the sole person to be consulted.

At common law the father is entitled against the mother to the custody of the children; and though the Guardianship of Infants Act (1886) modifies this decision in certain cases, nevertheless the father, so long as he lives and is not guilty of misconduct, remains *primâ facie* the guardian of his children to the exclusion of the mother. Even after his death

she may find her wishes for the future of her children subject to those of a guardian appointed in her husband's will. Further than this, while the widower is by the Act of 1907 admitted to contract a legal marriage with his deceased wife's sister with a view to taking better care of his children, no similar opportunity is given to the widow who wishes to find a father to her children in her deceased husband's brother.

If a man dies intestate his wife is only entitled to a portion of his estate, while if she dies intestate her husband holds her lands for life and has a right to the whole of her personal property.

The divorce laws, as is well known, are unequal between man and woman, for whereas the law grants divorce to a man for the simple misconduct of his wife, similar behaviour by the husband does not free the woman from the marriage tie. She can only obtain divorce by proving, in addition, cruelty or desertion; and by a recent decision of the Court, where the woman has been separated from her husband owing to his atrocious behaviour, this separation will not justify her in claiming desertion.

Apart from these cases of differential treatment between men and women there are several laws applying only to women, which are in need of

radical alteration. Among these is the question of the age of consent, which at present stands at sixteen years, and should certainly be raised. Other unjust laws relate to concealment of birth and infanticide by mothers directly after birth; these questions are not likely to be properly dealt with until women have the Parliamentary vote.

Prospect for the Future.

Inferior as is the position of women to-day before the law, it is liable to become very much worse if certain proposals freely talked about by Cabinet Ministers are translated into active legislative measures. Mr. John Burns said a little while ago—and other Cabinet Ministers have supported his remarks—that it is proposed in the near future to introduce legislation to restrict the labour of women, and particularly that of married women. These proposals, if carried into effect, will strike a direct blow at the economic independence of women, and, while there is no suggestion of providing at the same time any additional rights of maintenance of the wife at the hands of her husband, either for herself or her children, will seriously cripple her in her duties as mother and housewife.

Many more illustrations might be put forward of the serious disabilities under which women suffer, but enough have been given to show the urgent need for reform—a reform which can only be undertaken by a Parliament responsible to women as well as to men.

CHAPTER V.

WOMEN AND THE ADMINISTRATION.

In the last chapter the question of the inferior position of women under the laws of the country was dealt with, but another matter equally important is the position of inferiority which women hold where the administration of the country is concerned. This also is due to their voteless position at the present time, because the Ministers who govern the country, though nominally appointed by the King, are, in fact, responsible to the House of Commons.

We are so used to the exclusion of women from all the more important civil positions that most people take it entirely for granted. They do not realise how artificial it is and still less do they realise how this exclusion reacts both to the disadvantage of women and to the serious loss of the community, who are compelled to accept a man as against a woman, however much her qualifications may be superior to his.

Almost all the more lucrative posts which are controlled by the Government are reserved exclusively for men, and in those cases where both men and women are eligible, the men receive a very much higher salary for the same services. Curiously enough, the very highest post in the whole country—that of the Sovereign of the realm—may be held either by a man or a woman, a relic of the time when women's constitutional rights were greater than they are to-day. But with this exception all the greatest positions are the exclusive prerogative of the male sex. Though such a woman as Queen Victoria, who did not rise to her position owing to her exceptional ability, but owing to the accident of birth, did actually exercise kingly functions, and played a very real part in the government of the country, yet in every other position of governmental power it is assumed that men only are to be selected. This rule applies right through the various grades of official positions, from that of Viceroy to those of the clerks in Somerset House, and, with few exceptions, it is only when we come to the bottom rungs of the ladder that women have been admitted as employees at all.

Even in the exceptions, of which the most prominent are those of inspectors of schools and

inspectors of factories, we find an extraordinary bias in favour of men. With regard to the inspectors of schools, though there are far more women teachers than men teachers, and more girl scholars than boy scholars, we find that in the ranks of the inspectors of elementary schools there are 244 men and only about eighteen women appointed by the Government. The salary of the head male inspector is £1,000 a year, while that of the chief woman inspector is only £500. In the secondary schools the same proportion holds good—where there are about thirty men inspectors there are only three women inspectors, and where the salaries of the former range from £400 to £800 per annum, those of the latter are only £300 per annum; moreover, the women only hold their posts for five years; yet the work done in the two cases is almost identical.

School teachers themselves are not in the direct employ of the Government, but of the county councils. Nevertheless, the Board of Education has a very large amount of control in the matter of their appointment, and we find that the salaries of women teachers are roughly about two-thirds of those of the men teachers, in spite of the fact that they are given control of as large classes as the men, and that they have equal qualifications.

In the case of factory inspectors the same considerations apply—the salaries of the male inspectors range up to £1,200 per annum, while the maximum for the women does not exceed £550. Here again, in spite of the fact that there are millions of women employed in factories, while there are 900 men inspectors there are less than a score of women.

In the Post Office.

Among the less lucrative employments under Government must be reckoned the Post Office, and here a large number of women are employed. But though men and women are selected for the same work, the salaries of the men are very much higher than those of the women, as the figures given for the central office for the following classes of employees amply illustrate: For sorters the lowest salary of men is 20s. per week, rising by annual increases of 2s. 4d. per week to 62s.; for women, on the other hand, the salary commences at 14s. and rises, by an increment of 1s. at first and 2s. later, to 30s. a week. With telegraphists the men start at 18s. per week and rise to 65s., while the women start at 16s. and rise to 40s. The maximum salaries of men and women second

division clerks are £250 and £100 per annum respectively. The work is very similar, and in many cases women do the actual work formerly performed by men, and *vice versa*.

Perhaps the most striking illustration of the different way in which the administration treats men and women is provided by a comparison between the wages of the men employees in Government factories and those of women. In Woolwich Arsenal and other places where men are employed the Government have been forced to pay trade union rate of wages, while in the Army Clothing Works, where women are employed, the Government rank among the worst of employers. Moreover, by their deliberate refusal to standardise the wages of women working for their sub-contractors (in spite of repeated requests from the best sub-contractors to do so) they have been the cause of the wages of these women sinking to the most terribly sweated level. A further illustration was the refusal of Mr. John Burns to have relief works for women out of employment, whilst sanctioning works for men.

Loss to the Community.

It must not be supposed, moreover, that the only loss suffered through the administration

being solely in the hands of men is that of the women who are either excluded from employment or paid an inferior salary. The exclusion of women, either in whole or in part, from the service of the State is in itself a serious thing for the community. The fact that there is not a proportionate number of women factory inspectors, of school inspectors, and of other officials, means that the women's point of view is omitted in all these matters, and that the grievances that only women are likely to be able to remedy are omitted from consideration.

Take, for instance, the case of relieving officers. Boards of guardians, which are responsible to men and women electors, have frequently desired to appoint women relieving officers, and it is evident to everyone who thinks about the question at all, and understands the delicate matters which arise between relieving officers and the poor of both sexes who have to be relieved, that women are badly needed for these positions. Yet the Local Government Board has placed every obstacle in the way, and has insisted on confining the posts to men, to the serious detriment of the work which has to be done.

Again, the requirements of women prisoners evidently demand the services of a proportionately

large staff of women prison doctors and inspectors, yet there is not a single woman doctor employed in the prisons, and until the present franchise agitation there were no women prison inspectors at all, and even to-day there is only one for all the prisons throughout the whole country. Then, again, women have to be tried in courts of law where the jury consists solely of men, who, even with the best intentions, frequently fail entirely to understand their position.

But apart altogether from the question of the appointment of women to look after matters such as these, the exclusion of the women's point of view from the administrative departments implies serious loss. This is true in some measure of all the departments; three particular illustrations will suffice. The Local Government Board has to decide problems of housing and sanitation, of the upbringing of children in the workhouse schools, and a number of other matters in which women ought to be consulted. The Home Office makes regulations for factories, laundries, and prisons, and for home work. It controls the Metropolitan Police, and in many ways comes into contact with the lives of men and women. The Board of Education is responsible for the curriculum of the girls as well as the boys, and thus the whole

arrangement for the teaching of the young is ultimately under the control of men alone.

No wonder that women realise that in the field of administration their exclusion from the vote is fraught with the most serious consequences to the community.

CHAPTER VI.

ANTI-SUFFRAGE ARGUMENTS.

It is not often that opponents of woman suffrage come out into the open. Anti-Suffrage M.P.'s are wont to hide their light under a bushel when they come to election time, and so to deprive us of that ripe wisdom to which we are surely entitled! Other opponents usually confine themselves to general expressions of disapproval, coupled with such statements as "men are men and women are women," which, however much they may command acceptance for their undoubted truth, require for their use as arguments against woman suffrage a link which is not supplied. Fortunately, however, anti-suffrage societies have now come to the rescue, and have formulated a group of statements. Lord Curzon has given us "fifteen incontrovertible reasons." By means of these and the occasional "voice" at suffrage meetings, we are able to put together a fairly coherent set of arguments against giving women the vote. Excluding arguments

against the methods adopted by the suffragettes, which will be dealt with in later chapters, they may be reduced to some ten principal reasons.

- I. "*Votes for Women*" is not desired by the majority of women, nor is it a change approved by the majority of men.

Even if this assertion were true, the criterion which it proposes to set up is unsound, and has not been adopted before in the case of male extensions of the franchise. As the Rt. Hon. W. E. Gladstone pointed out in the case of the agricultural labourers' franchise, if it is right that a certain section or class of the community should have the vote, the desirableness of giving it to them is not impaired by the fact that they do not demand it. Still less should the opinion of the existing electorate decide the issue. Even if only a small minority of an unenfranchised class desire the vote, and the vast majority of the existing electorate be opposed to it, still there is on these grounds no valid reason why the vote should be withheld from that minority who desire it.

But facts are not with those who put forward this objection. For though it is impossible in a country so large as ours to prove incontrovertibly that the majority of women or men favour a cer-

tain course, such indications as are available point to overwhelming support for woman suffrage. When the Franchise Act of 1867 was first passed, it was originally thought that women were included, and it was decided to test this in the Manchester district. A canvass was accordingly made, and out of 4,215 women who might be qualified, 3,924, or 92 per cent. sent in claims to be registered as voters. They were, however, disallowed.

More petitions, with a larger number of signatures, have been presented for woman suffrage than for any other reform. Between the years of 1867 and 1884 these amounted to over three million signatures. At this time, and again during the last four years, enormous demonstrations, including that in Hyde Park in 1908, when according to *The Times* half a million people were present, have been held in support of it, while no meetings at all comparable in size or enthusiasm have been held in opposition to the proposal. Finally candidates for Parliament in increasing numbers are found advocating it in their speeches at elections and in their election addresses, while very few commit themselves to opposition, and even known opponents frequently "hedge" on the subject when questioned; these facts are an almost incontrovertible proof that in the opinion of political

agents at any rate woman suffrage is popular in the country.

- 2. Men and women are different, and have different spheres of life. To the former belong politics. To the latter the functions of maternity and the cares of home. To add politics to woman's sphere would be to impair her true work in the home.*

The fallacy underlying this argument is the assumption that politics are all-engrossing or, at any rate, that they occupy a very large part of life. This is only the case with those few persons who specialise in politics. For the great majority of men politics consist in recording a vote once in every four or five years, in going to an occasional political meeting, and in talking over the subject with acquaintances. By no conceivable theory of woman's life (except that which would chain her to her house for twenty-four hours out of the twenty-four) is there anything here incompatible with the complete fulfilment of her home duties. What a tiny amount of time is required by politics compared with that spent by the rich woman on her social pleasures or by the woman who goes out to work at her employment. Nor in the matter of attention is she obliged to give a scrap more than

it is healthy for a human being to give to the world outside him. However good a wife, a mother, or a housekeeper a woman may be, it is good for her to have some ideas outside her own hearth, and she will perform her own work better for devoting a reasonable amount of time to their consideration. Just as a man adds politics to his own work in the world as a wage-earner so a woman will add politics to her work as a homekeeper.

There is not space to touch on many other aspects of this question. The importance of women possessing the vote for the very purpose of securing good laws for the home has been already dealt with in a previous chapter. Again, many women who will win the vote are not homekeepers but breadwinners, and their position to-day is precisely similar to that of the ordinary man. Finally it may be noted that the experience of those countries where women are already voters belies the suggestion of opponents. In New Zealand, in Australia, in the four States of America where women are enfranchised, the homes are better kept, the children better cared for than in those countries where women are denied enfranchisement.

3. *Votes for women will lead to dissensions in the home.*

It is difficult to treat this argument seriously.

It is so much more natural to assume that husband and wife will generally share one another's opinions, and that when they do not do so, the right of each to give vent to their views by the vote will obviate the friction engendered by only one of them being enfranchised and will make husband and wife better comrades in consequence. It will also heighten the respect in which the mother is held by the children. And this is in fact the experience of New Zealand and other countries where women possess the vote.

4. *The vote is not required for the removal of grievances. Where such exist they can be removed by a Parliament responsible to men.*

The proof of the pudding is in the eating. Women have grievances of long standing which have not been remedied by men's Parliament. They see new grievances being created every year by the law and the administration. They see that working men only began to get their grievances removed when they got the vote. And they prefer to have the power to insist on what they want rather than to trust to the generosity of politicians.

5. *If women get the vote they will lose the respect of men.*

This argument is contrary to all experience.

Working men only began to be respected when they got the vote.

6. *If the vote is given to women on the same terms as men it will help to put the Tory Party in power. If the vote is given to women on the same terms as men it will help to put the Radical Party in power.*

These two arguments used by Liberals and Conservatives respectively are mutually destructive. There is no solid foundation for either assumption. The only thing which can guide us to any conclusion is the analysis of the women on the Municipal Register. This analysis has been made by the I.L.P., and shows that about 80 per cent. are working women, so that the classes in the new electorate would probably be divided much as they are at the present time.

7. *If women get the vote on the same terms as men it will not stop there. On the one hand, women will want to be M.P.'s and to occupy many administrative positions; on the other hand, it will lead to Adult Suffrage.*

It is certainly to be hoped that when women get the vote many reforms will follow, but whether it will lead to these specific alterations will depend

upon the decision of the electorate in which men will outnumber women in the proportion of six or seven to one. It is impossible for us to predict what that electorate will decide, and it is not for us to attempt in this generation to solve the problems of the next. But the following facts show that the conclusions suggested are not a necessary consequence. Eighty years ago it was predicted that Manhood Suffrage would speedily follow the Reform Bill of 1832, but this has not taken place up to the present time; clergymen possess the vote, but they are not entitled to sit in the House of Commons. Finally, even if a woman was eligible for Parliament she could not go there unless she was elected by a constituency which thought her more suitable than another candidate.

8. *Women are too emotional, do not think imperially, and in other ways cannot be relied upon for that broad and stable judgment required in those in whose keeping the destiny of the country is to be entrusted. Consequently their enfranchisement would jeopardise the future of the country and would lower it in the eyes of our dependencies and of the civilised world.*

The last part of this argument is sometimes

stated separately, and it is made to appear that even if woman suffrage would of itself strengthen the government of the country it should be avoided because it would lower the country in the eyes of the world; but this suggestion is so preposterous and shows such a poor spirit in those who make it, who confess themselves afraid to try an admittedly good experiment for fear of being laughed at, that I have purposely put the argument into its only reasonable form. It all comes back, therefore, to a question of whether women are or are not fitted to vote on the affairs of the country.

In dealing with this, it should be noted in the first place that a voter is not called upon to govern the country. A set of twenty women selected at random might not make a good Cabinet, nor a set of 670 a good House of Commons, but the same is equally true of a random selection of twenty or 670 men. As a matter of fact, however, the women who through an accident of birth have been called upon to exercise kingly functions have a record at least as good as that of men. Queen Boadicea, Queen Elizabeth, Queen Victoria, in our own country, Maria Theresa, the late Dowager Empress of China, the Begum of Bhopal, India, are names that have only to be mentioned to command respect.

But such high functions are not demanded of the average voter. All he is asked to do is to vote for Mr. X or for Mr. Y, to say whether he prefers the general line of policy put forward by the party of Mr. X or by that of Mr. Y. On this women are inherently quite equally capable of forming a sound judgment as men. The universities have proved the intellectual equality of men and women. In business the comparatively few women who have actually come into the field have exhibited qualities of no mean order. Women are more law-abiding, more sober, more conscientious than men. Where opportunity has offered they have shown themselves fully as alive to the demand for patriotism. They are admittedly more self-sacrificing.

It is true that up till recently only a few women had been trained in political outlook, but this is always so with an unenfranchised class, and to-day the number is rapidly increasing. It is true also that their point of view may be different from that of men, that their conclusions are sometimes arrived at by different means, but this is no reason whatever for excluding them from the vote. On the contrary, it is on this account all the more important that their judgment should be taken conjointly with that of the male electors.

9. *All government ultimately rests on a physical force basis; the vote is a civilised way of appealing to this potential physical force. Government will therefore only be stable so long as the units of equal voting power are at the same time units of equal physical force. Women are in general weaker, physically, than men, therefore to introduce them on equal terms with men as voters would be to put the Government of the country on an unstable foundation.*

Powerfully as this argument appeals to a certain type of mind it is extraordinarily defective. Nearly every premiss is unsound, and is demonstrably so, not merely theoretically, but by the very widest experience of life.

Let us take them one at a time. Firstly, "Government ultimately rests on physical force." This is patently false. If it were true the government of the world would be in the hands of the most physically powerful. The elephant, the rhinoceros, the tiger would lord it over the wolf, the snake, the bird, and even man himself. But it is not so, and the simple reason is that forces other than the merely physical play at least an equally important part. Even in the animal world the cunning of the serpent makes him more than a

match for other far stronger beasts, the agility of the bird enables him to hold his own with the greatest of animals, the moral force of combination exhibited by the wolf gives him the advantage in deadly combat. In the human race these essential forces are still more important. The Zulus are far stronger physically than the white races, but they are in subjection to them because the white men, through their intelligence, use their smaller physical force to much better advantage. And inside the limits of a single country, if it were possible to put on one side a number of men of great physical strength and comparatively small brain power, and on the other an equal number of men of less physical strength and greater brain power, the victory in a civil war would almost undoubtedly be with the latter. Moreover, still higher forces enter in and play their part—the moral forces which make for combination, which enables some men to face death that their comrades may be victorious—the spiritual forces which inspire and uplift beyond our finite understanding. Government does *not* rest ultimately on physical force; it rests on all the forces which go to make up the sum total of life.

But the argument of the anti-suffragist is not merely untrue in its major premiss; it is untrue

also in its other premisses. The vote is *not* the civilised way of appealing to the physical force of the country. It has not been and is not the case in any country in the world. In most countries only a limited number of men possess the vote; the physical force of the remainder of the men (often among the brawniest in the country), to say nothing of the women and children, is entirely unrepresented, while another section have two, three, or even ten or twenty votes apiece. In countries where adult male suffrage prevails, no attempt is made to distinguish between strong and weak men, or to take any account of the aggregate physical strength of the women. The nearest approach to accuracy is in the case of adult male and female suffrage, and this is the anti-suffragists' *bête noir*! The real fact is that the vote, instead of being the way of appealing to the physical force of the country, is the expression of the mature judgment of the individual, and that modern States have decided that in this way, by taking the judgments of the majority of responsible citizens, they are most likely to arrive at the best result.

Thirdly, the anti-suffragist argues that only those Governments will be stable which are voted into power by votes corresponding to equal units of physical force. He has against him the whole

of human history. For despotisms, aristocracies, and other forms of government based on totally different principles have not only existed for thousands of years, but have survived up to the present day.

Fourthly, the anti-suffragist asserts that women are physically weaker than men; in this his statement needs considerable modification. What he really means is that the average woman is slightly weaker than the average man, a totally different assertion, which would not, it seems, justify, even on his own grounds, the exclusion from the vote of that large section of women who are physically stronger than a great number of men.

Finally, he comes to his triumphant conclusion that for women to possess the vote would make the Government unstable. Having shown that every premiss and every step in the reasoning is false, it is not necessary to add anything to destroy the conclusion. The only real stability for Government lies in the inclusion of women among the electorate. For, without their help, the Government can neither go to war nor carry on the avocations of peace. It is dependent on them for the very *personnel* of which future generations of citizens are to be composed.

10. *There is no precedent among important countries with imperial interests for granting the suffrage to women.*

O Mr. Anti-suffragist, what a chicken-livered creature you are! Where would you be if our forefathers had hesitated to make precedents when precedents were required? What of Magna Charta? What of Britain's boast that it taught the world the meaning of *Constitutional* Government? What of the *Mother* of Parliaments? What of all our traditions of freedom and liberty? Go hide away in your primeval cave and trouble us no further!

CHAPTER VII.

FORTY YEARS OF LADYLIKE METHODS.

The Suffragettes are frequently accused of being impatient. Their critics forget that the virtue of patience exists only in moderation. When great causes are at stake the continued exercise of patience after it has been proved to be of no avail ceases to be of virtue, and becomes a vice. To be inactive when action is demanded in the interests of humanity is to commit the crime of negligence—a crime as heinous and as deadly as any of those active crimes which are punished by the codes of nations or anathematised by the teachings of the religions of the world. When the Suffragettes commenced their vigorous action the time for patience had long gone by. If anyone doubts it, let him ponder on the facts of the following historical survey.

The modern agitation for the franchise dates from 1866, when the women found a champion of their cause in John Stuart Mill. This was the time

when the Household Franchise Bill was under discussion, and John Stuart Mill determined to move an amendment to that measure. A petition was immediately got together, and in the course of a fortnight the signatures of 1,500 women were obtained, principally by Miss Emily Davies in London, and by Mrs. Wolstenholme Elmy (then Miss Wolstenholme) in Manchester. Prominent among the number of signatories were the names of Frances Cobbe, Harriet Martineau, Florence Davenport Hill, and Mrs. Josephine Butler.

John Stuart Mill's amendment, expressly including women voters, was defeated, but in the Act the word "man" was used in place of the words "male person," which had occurred in the Act of 1832. In view of Lord Brougham's Act, by which it had been decided that the word "man" should invariably be taken to include women, unless the contrary were specifically stated, it was thought by many people that women were therefore now enfranchised. Accordingly, in various parts of the country women sought to be put upon the register. How great was the demand for their enfranchisement may be seen from a canvass which was carried on in Manchester and the surrounding districts. In that constituency, out of a total number of 4,215 possible women electors, 3,924—or

about 92 per cent.—sent in claims. The case, however, was decided against the women in the Law Courts—*Chorlton v. Lings*—and the desire of women to be placed upon the register was frustrated.

Fifteen Years' Strenuous Work.

It was therefore decided to commence a vigorous constitutional agitation. Miss Lydia Becker was at the head of the movement, and she and those with her did exceedingly active work. Great public meetings were held and enormous petitions were presented. Thus in 1873, 919 petitions with 329,206 signatures were presented to the House of Commons in support of the Women's Bill. In 1874 there were 1,404 petitions with 430,343 signatures. In 1875, 1,273 petitions, with 415,622 signatures. In all between 1866 and 1879, it is computed that the number of petitions amounted to 9,563, and that the signatures numbered over three millions!

The agitation by public meeting was on an equally extensive scale, and between 1,300 and 1,400 meetings (an enormous number for those days) were held to promote the cause. Among

these were nine great demonstrations in the largest halls in the principal towns in the country. These were as follows:—

1. Manchester, Free Trade Hall, February 8th, 1880.
2. London, St. James's Hall, May 6th, 1880.
3. Bristol, Colston Hall, November 4th, 1880.
4. Birmingham, Town Hall, February 12th, 1881.
5. Bradford, St. George's Hall, November 22nd, 1881.
6. Nottingham, Albert Hall, November 30th, 1881.
7. Sheffield, Albert Hall, February 27th, 1882.
8. Glasgow, St. Andrew's Hall, November 3rd, 1882.
9. Edinburgh, Hall of U.P. Synod, March 22nd, 1884.

In every case the audience, with few exceptions, was confined to women, and immense enthusiasm was evoked, the support for woman suffrage being practically unanimous. The campaign was kept up until 1884, when the County Franchise Bill was under discussion. It was understood that there was a majority of the House of Commons in

favour of woman suffrage, and, the Liberal Government being in power, a memorial was addressed to the Prime Minister asking that the Government would allow the woman suffrage amendment to be submitted to the free and unbiassed consideration of the House on its merits. This request the Right Hon. W. E. Gladstone unceremoniously refused, saying that the Government would disclaim all responsibility for the County Franchise Bill if the woman suffrage amendment was carried. Accordingly, when the vote was taken, a large number of Liberal Members pledged to support woman suffrage voted against the amendment, including Mr. John Morley (now Lord Morley), who justified his action on the ground that, though he was prepared to support woman suffrage as an independent measure, he was not prepared to support its inclusion in the Government Reform Bill.

Supporters of woman suffrage then pinned their faith to an independent measure, but the Right Hon. W. E. Gladstone succeeded in thwarting this proposal also, for although he gave an undertaking that he would not interfere with the discretion of private Members on this occasion, he so arranged Parliamentary business that the Bill never came on for discussion.

After Constitutional Effort Failed.

It was at this stage of the proceedings that the leaders of the woman suffragists ought to have seen that the limits of patience were exhausted, and that the time to act had come. A constitutional agitation of magnificent proportions had been carried on; the demand for the vote had been expressed by women all over the country; it had been supported by prominent men and by the Councils of leading municipalities. Nevertheless, it had been defeated by the direct intervention of the Liberal Prime Minister, Mr. Gladstone. There was now no course open to self-respecting women but to take up immediately a spirited policy of opposition to the Liberal Government. Had they done this they would undoubtedly have compelled action from one or other of the political parties. Instead of this, however, they contented themselves with a mild protest, and with vain regrets at the unfaithfulness of their nominal friends.

The effect upon the movement was immediate. Women who had worked actively in hope now gave up the conflict in despair. The astuteness of the Liberal Premier suggested to him the advisability of keeping women politicians busy by giving

them a small amount of political influence inside the ranks of the party. The Women's Liberal Association was formed, with Mrs. W. E. Gladstone as its president, and obtained a large number of recruits from the woman suffrage ranks. Another large section of women devoted themselves to individual causes, leaving the ranks of the suffrage army. The residue that remained, disheartened by failure and by the death of their leader, Miss Becker, put up a pitifully small show of resistance. Meanwhile, inside the House of Commons the woman suffrage cause languished, and for some years the Bill never reached a second reading division. It began to be understood that as with the connivance of the leaders of both political parties the question of woman suffrage had been burked before, so it would be again; and private Members were content to give pledges at election times to women, knowing that when once in the House they would find a means of escaping from their obligation.

In 1897 a final effort in the line of constitutional agitation was carried out in the shape of a monster memorial to Members of Parliament containing the names of 257,000 women in favour of the extension of the suffrage. But though this memorial was actually introduced, very little notice was taken

of it beyond a cursory mention in the House of Commons and in the Press.*

From that date till the year 1905 the movement retrogressed in vitality and public esteem. Politicians ridiculed it, the man in the street forgot it, women were ashamed to belong to it. Woman suffrage meetings were attended by a handful of people only, and amongst these there was no life nor hope. The fact was that the day for peaceful agitation was past; politicians had turned a deaf ear to the claim for justice. They had to be forced to listen by very different means.

* It is now admitted (see the Liberal "Year Book") that petitions and memorials weigh very little with members of Parliament. They are now regarded as signs of successful organisation rather than of enthusiasm or living interest.

CHAPTER VIII.

MILITANT METHODS.

“I come not to bring peace on earth, but a sword.”

No one idea has done more to retard the progress of the human race than the exaltation of *submission* into a high and noble virtue. It may often be expedient to submit; it may even sometimes be morally right to do so in order to avoid a greater evil; but *submission* is not inherently beautiful—it is generally cowardly and frequently morally wrong.

This view is, of course, contrary to the teaching which has long prevailed. From time immemorial the rulers of men have demanded of their subjects *submission*, and have enforced it with their armies and their police and their prisons. But, not content with this, they have instigated the teachers and the preachers of the people to extol it as a great moral and religious principle—a symbol of obedience to God Himself. This teaching has done incalculable evil. It has hindered the exercise of

the real functions of the human body, it has destroyed the liberty of the human will, it has clipped the wings of the human imagination.

Particularly have those whose natures are peaceable and loving, who place the good of others before that of themselves, been led astray by this false doctrine. Not content with sacrificing themselves and their own true development entirely to the wishes of others, they have yielded even where their duties as guardians and protectors of the weak should have compelled them to stand firm. They have not seen that to give way under such circumstances, to be overruled and to fail to provide the protection required, was a serious breach of trust to be resisted at all costs and with the strongest power which it was possible to exert.

Serious as have been the consequences of this doctrine in other fields, they have been nowhere more fatal than in the case of women who have been led in large numbers to believe any other rule of conduct unwomanly. As a result, a whole set of ideas necessary for the proper evolution of the human race has been crushed out of existence, and the man's point of view has held exclusive sway.

Nothing in life is more beautiful than the relationship of the mother to the child, by which she gives freely and unhesitatingly of all that she

has to the young life. This *devotion* is in accordance with the natural and highest instincts of her nature, but to transfer this *devotion* into *submission* to the will of others, even when such *submission* implies renunciation of the guardianship and proper care for her own children, is to pervert the primal instincts of woman into wrong and improper channels. In allowing her ideas to become subservient to those of men she committed a breach of trust. To-day she has to recover her lost position.

The adoption of militant methods by women in this fight for the vote is the outward sign that they have at last abandoned this false and pernicious doctrine of *submission*. It is the recognition that they have duties to perform, services to render to the State and to one another, to men and to children, which they cannot and will not any longer leave undone. For centuries men have usurped the domination and treated women as an inferior and subject race. When women sought to obtain their proper place by methods of argument and entreaty, they were tricked and humbugged by politicians. To-day they have decided to submit no longer, and, realising that persuasion has failed, they have determined to use coercive measures.

This awakening of women to the stern realities

of life is not to be regretted; it cannot be good for any section of the human family to live their lives in artificial surroundings cut off from actuality. Moreover, for many years women workers have suffered under stress of the laws of conflict and struggle which form part of the daily round. It was full time that their more sheltered sisters should be undeceived.

These facts are of universal application, true not merely of the fight for the vote, but of other conflicts in daily life. If this be granted, it only remains to show that the actual militant methods adopted by the Suffragettes are such as commend themselves to reason and common sense. Here the opposition of a special set of objectors has to be met. These men and women are perfectly aware that, in their social intercourse, in their business transactions, in their dealings with their tradespeople, persuasion and courtesy are not enough, and that some form of pressure must be applied, but they say that they never have occasion to adopt methods even remotely similar to those used by the Suffragettes against their political opponents. They put a case in somewhat the following words:—

“ If one of my friends does things to me which I do not like, or says things to me which are disagreeable, I do not dog his doorstep or send my

children to annoy him or shout at him when he goes outside his house. If my landlord raises my rent or refuses to abide by the conditions of the lease, I do not make myself personally unpleasant to him. If my baker sells me bad bread or my fishmonger bad fish, I do not thereupon bring a body of customers together round his shop and force him to protect himself and his goods by a *posse* of police. I know quite well these are the wrong ways to get the matter put right, and if I adopted them I should not only make myself extremely ridiculous, but I should fail entirely of my object. Why, then, do you adopt these methods in trying to get the vote? ”

The Unique Character of a Franchise Struggle.

The answer to this question lies in the fact that the struggle of a voteless section of the population to wrest for itself the franchise from the Government is a unique struggle, differing in essential particulars from any other struggle to obtain redress in the ordinary affairs of life. If your friend behaves badly to you in any way, it is always open to you to cease to have him for a friend; that will at once free you from the intrusion of his presence, and the knowledge that your friendship may be

terminated by either of you at will serves always (if no higher consideration prevails) to deter him from saying or doing anything to you which might be a cause of offence. If your landlord fails to abide by the terms of the lease, you have the remedy of the law against him; if he raises your rent unduly, you can leave his house untenanted. If your fishmonger serves you with bad fish, or your baker with bad bread, you have the remedy always at hand in your ability to transfer your custom to other shops; and the knowledge that you can take this action if things go too far gives weight to your words of remonstrance which they would not otherwise possess.

But in the case of a Government you have no such means of redress. So long as you remain in the country you are constitutionally subject to the control of the Government and under the direct jurisdiction of the laws of the land which they enact and enforce. You cannot refuse to recognise the Government as a Government. You cannot, if you are voteless, bring constitutional pressure to bear to change the Government of the day. You cannot bring the law into action to enforce your rights, for the simple reason that you have no rights. Wherever, therefore, the Government of the day has stood out against the wishes of the

people who were unrepresented, there revolutionary methods have had to be resorted to. It was revolutionary methods which won Magna Charta, which broke the arbitrary power of the Stuarts, which freed the people of France, which brought about the Reform Bills of 1832 and 1867.

It was the thought that women under no circumstances would adopt revolutionary methods which led to the callous attitude of Members of Parliament towards the Woman Suffrage agitation. But women have now decided that if no other way is open to win their liberty, even revolution will not be eschewed.

In succeeding chapters I shall trace the origin and development of the militant methods adopted by the Women's Social and Political Union, showing how carefully they have been chosen so as never to exceed by one iota the absolute necessities of the situation.

CHAPTER IX.

ORIGIN OF THE MILITANT CAMPAIGN.

In the seventh chapter an account was given of the so-called "constitutional" methods which were employed in the agitation for the vote prior to the formation of the Women's Social and Political Union. It was shown how the demand for the suffrage on the part of women was expressed by great meetings and great petitions, and that the movement had grown to great dimensions when it was checked by the opposition of the Liberal leaders in 1884, and how from that date onwards it diminished in size and influence. If woman suffrage was again to become a question of practical politics, a new departure had to be made and a new set of tactics adopted, and the apathy and trickery which prevailed in political circles had to be broken down.

In 1905, before the commencement of the militant tactics, the Press had almost entirely ceased to report any woman suffrage meetings or to print

any letters upon this question. Private Members of Parliament and candidates for Parliamentary honours found a very easy means of dealing with woman suffrage. At election time, and when confronted by women whose help was required, they paid a lip-homage to woman suffrage, even promising, when occasion presented itself, to vote in favour of the Woman Suffrage Bill. When the need for this lip-homage had gone by, in the presence of their men friends, they smiled at the gullibility of the women, and promised themselves that no serious results would ensue from the pledge which they had given. Even those of them who were seriously in favour of the reform, and honestly wished to carry it into law, found that once in the House of Commons they were quite powerless to achieve their object. The question, being a non-party one, was never taken up by the Government of the day, and they as private Members had no means of forcing it into prominence, still less of actually carrying into law a woman suffrage measure. Members of the Government, on the other hand, found that it was easy to evade the issue. While it might be difficult or dangerous to give a direct negative and so alienate the women who were good workers for the party, it was easy to give vague expressions of sympathy and adher-

ence which could never be construed into definite pledges of immediate action. This was the situation in the year 1905. The women of the older generation had inured themselves to submission, and those who ardently desired victory for the cause saw with sorrowful hearts the object of their desire fading further and further away.

Formation of the W.S.P.U.

But another movement was being born, a new spirit was entering into the hearts of women, the new lesson that submission may be a breach of trust was beginning to be understood. Two years previously—in October, 1903—Mrs. Pankhurst had formed the Women's Social and Political Union, and she and her daughter Christabel had worked hard by the recognised means to work up a political agitation in favour of woman suffrage. They had been so far successful that resolutions of support had been carried wherever they went. But with the autumn of 1905 came a new political situation. The sands of the Conservative Government were running out, and a new Government was being formed, pledging itself in all directions to reform, basing itself upon the tenets of democracy, and appealing to the country on the ground

that it supported the people against the powers of privilege. Christabel Pankhurst saw at once that the first step in the new campaign must be to find out where that Government would stand in the matter. An appeal must be made directly to it as the fountain source of legislation; and just as it was no good asking for private support from the ordinary Members of the House of Commons, so was it equally useless to elicit sympathy or approval from any Cabinet Minister in his individual capacity. The only thing that mattered was the intention of the Government as a whole, not the intention of support or good wishes, but the intention of action. Was the new Government going to *do* anything to bring about woman suffrage?

The first opportunity of interrogating them on this point presented itself when Sir Edward Grey came to Manchester on October 13th, 1905, to expound Liberal policy at the Free Trade Hall, and accordingly Christabel Pankhurst and Annie Kenney went there on behalf of the Women's Social and Political Union to question him on the subject of woman suffrage.

They waited quietly all through his speech, neither making any interruptions nor attempting to put their question to him; but when his speech was over and questions were invited from the audience,

then after several men had put questions and had received an answer, Annie Kenney rose from her seat and asked whether if the Liberal Government were returned to power they would take steps to give votes to women. No answer was received. She held up a little banner inscribed with the words "Votes for Women" in order that the nature of the question might be understood by the audience, and pressed for an answer. But the men sitting near her forced her down into her seat, and one of the stewards of the meeting held his hat over her face. Meanwhile the hall was filled with a babel of conflicting sound: shouts of "Sit down!" "Be quiet!" "What's the matter?" and "Let the lady speak!" were heard on every hand.

Then Christabel Pankhurst got up and asked again: "Will the Liberal Government give women the vote?" But Sir Edward Grey made no answer, and again rose the tumult of cries and counter-cries. Then the chief constable of Manchester, Mr. William Peacock, came down from the platform to where the women were sitting, and asked them to write out the question that they had put to the speakers, saying that he would himself take it to the chairman and make sure that it received an answer. The women agreed to this suggestion, and Annie Kenney now wrote, "Will

the Liberal Government give votes to working women? Signed on behalf of the Women's Social and Political Union, Annie Kenney (member of the Oldham Committee of the Card and Blowing Room Operatives)." To this she added that as one of the 96,000 organised women cotton workers, and for their sake, she earnestly desired that the question should be answered.

The Question Unanswered.

Mr. Peacock took the paper on which the question had been written back to the platform, and was seen to hand it to Sir Edward Grey, who, having read it, smiled and passed it to the chairman, from whom it went the round of every speaker in turn. Then it was laid aside, and no answer was returned to it. After this a vote of thanks to Sir Edward Grey was moved by Lord Durham and Mr. Winston Churchill, and when it had been carried Sir Edward Grey rose to reply, but he made no reference to the enfranchisement of women. Then followed the moving of a vote of thanks to the chair, and by this time the meeting showed signs of breaking up. Some of the audience had left the hall, and some of those on the platform were preparing to go. The women's

question still remained unanswered, and seemed in danger of being forgotten by everyone concerned.

The simple fact was that Sir Edward Grey evidently thought it was better policy to remain silent. A favourable answer would mean a pledge to action, which he and his leaders were not prepared to take; an unfavourable answer would mean to disillusion that large body of Liberal women who might be so useful in getting the Liberal Government returned to power, and who, he thought, could be so conveniently put off by vague expressions of sympathy when once power had been obtained. Silence would mean, as it had often meant before, that no consequences at all would result from the question, and that most people in the hall would not realise that it had ever been asked.

But Sir Edward Grey reckoned on the assumption that the two women before him were made of the same submissive material as other women suffragists with whom he had come into contact. If that had been the case the dishonourable tactics employed would have been successful. If Christabel Pankhurst and Annie Kenney had been content with what they had done, if they had gone out of that meeting without further pressing for an answer, woman suffrage would have suffered once

more a rebuff, the hands of the clock would have been once more put back and the same old trick would have served once more to put off women because of their submission.

But Christabel Pankhurst and Annie Kenney were made of tougher steel, striking on which the baser metals of political tactics broke themselves to pieces. The women did not give way, they did not consent to allow their question to be ignored; they still pressed for a reply. Annie Kenney stood upon her seat and again called out as loudly as she could: "Will the Liberal Government give working women the vote?" At once the audience became a seething, infuriated mob. Thousands of angry men were on their feet shouting and gesticulating and crying out upon the woman who had again dared to disturb their meeting.

They howled at her fiercely, and numbers of Liberal stewards came hurrying to drag her down. Then Christabel Pankhurst started up, and put one arm round Annie Kenney's waist to guard her from the crowd, and with the other warded off their blows, while she still called, "The question, the question; answer the question!" So holding together, these two women fought for votes upon the site of Peterloo. At last six men—Liberal stewards and policemen in plain clothes—seized

Christabel Pankhurst, and dragged her away down the central aisle and past the platform. Then others followed bringing Annie Kenney after her. As they were forced along the women still looked up and asked their question, but still the Liberal leaders on the platform looked on apparently unmoved and never said a word.

Thus dragged out of the hall and flung into the street, Christabel Pankhurst and Annie Kenney started a meeting of protest outside the building. This the police refused to allow, and arrested them on a fabricated charge of assault. Brought before the magistrate the next day, they were sentenced to fine or imprisonment—Christabel Pankhurst to one week and Annie Kenney to three days—and both elected to go to prison.

Thus did Sir Edward Grey prefer to see women flung out of his meeting and sent to prison rather than give an answer to one straightforward question.

CHAPTER X.

THE FOUR YEARS' WAR.

It is no part of my intention to write a detailed account of the period of agitation which followed upon the incidents narrated in the last chapter; but a brief summary of events must necessarily be given in order that the nature of the action adopted by the women may be understood. For as in a war of armies the immediate tactics of one side are determined by the tactics of the enemy, so in the four years' war between the Liberal Government and the Suffragettes, the tactics of the latter were at each stage the necessary countermoves to the tactics employed by the Government.

The keynote of the attitude of the Liberal Government as shown by the line taken by Sir Edward Grey was to ignore woman suffrage, to refuse to admit any real demand for it among women, to refuse to discuss the question with its advocates, to pretend that there were no real advocates but only police-court rowdies, and to

treat them in consequence with physical violence in the hope of choking them off. The story of the Government's action during the four years' war was the development of this attitude.

The only possible answer to be made by women—unless they were to give right in—was to try to compel the Government to listen to the woman's case, to force them to argue it out on its merits, to accept violence at their hands rather than submit to remain voteless, and, if the Government proved obdurate, to appeal to a higher power—the electorate—to override them.

The attacking party were in all cases the women; the Government held an entrenched position from which they had to be removed if the vote was to be won, because no measure can be carried through the House of Commons unless it is smiled on by the Government. But the attack was in the earlier stages entirely political, while the Government's defence took the form of physical violence offered to women.

The opening scenes of the campaign were the meetings addressed by members of the Liberal Government prior to and during the General Election of 1906. To these the women went and interrogated the speakers. At first the questions were addressed at the close of the principal speech,

as was the case with Sir Edward Grey at Manchester, already referred to, and Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman at the Albert Hall. But when these questions were invariably ignored and the Suffragettes flung out with violence, when sometimes the speaker made a point of leaving immediately at the close of his speech, a new move was determined on, and the questions took the form of "heckling" or interruptions during the speeches. This method of calling attention to inconsistencies of speakers is a favourite device among men; and the achievements of the Liberal "voice" at Conservative meetings during the election of 1910 met with hearty approval in the columns of the Liberal Press.

After the General Election of 1906 this method of heckling speakers was vigorously pursued by members of the Women's Social and Political Union, and an attempt was also made to approach the Prime Minister direct by means of deputation. This he at first refused, but reconsidered his decision when the militant party showed that they did not intend to take "No" for an answer. A great deputation, representing all societies of organised women, accordingly waited upon Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman and urged their case. In reply, he stated that the Government would do nothing for them, and

counselled patience, and the conversion of their enemies in the Cabinet. This last piece of advice the militant suffragists took up with right good will and tried to obtain an interview with Mr. Asquith, but this was peremptorily refused. Women accordingly went to his house, and, on declining to go away without seeing him, were arrested and imprisoned.

From that time onward both methods of approach to Cabinet Ministers were regularly employed; "heckling" at meetings whenever a Minister spoke, and deputations to Mr. Asquith (by that time become Prime Minister) at the House of Commons. The former led to the ejection of women with greater and greater violence, the latter to their arrest on a charge of "obstructing" the police; for Mr. Asquith obstinately held to his absolute refusal to see any section of suffragettes at any time; even the "constitutional suffragists," after their great march to the Albert Hall on June 13th, 1908, and "the militants," even after their calling together the largest political demonstration ever held in the history of the world on June 21st of the same year. Brought before the magistrates, varying sentences were passed on them which, in 1908, had settled down to be one, two, and, in several cases, three months' imprisonment in the

second division (*i.e.*, without any of the rights of political prisoners) for the technical offence of obstruction of the police. In a kind of irony these sentences were given as an alternative to being "bound over to keep the peace," a way of escape from prison which it was well known Suffragettes' principles would not allow them to accept.

(Appealing to a Higher Power.)

At the same time that these methods of direct approach to Cabinet Ministers were being tried an appeal was being made at every by-election to the electors to show their disapproval of the subterfuges and inconsistencies and cruelties practised by the Government by voting against the Government nominee at the polls. This appeal was in many cases successful, the Liberal lost the seat and the Government majority was reduced and their power and prestige diminished.

On the other hand, all these things increased the power and influence of the Women's Social and Political Union; money was freely and generously given and numbers of new members rallied to its standard. In spite of rough handling, larger and larger numbers of women took part in "heckling"

Ministers, and so seriously did the members of the Government resent this form of attack that they determined to exclude women altogether from their meetings. This necessitated a new move on the part of the women, who felt obliged to make their voice heard at whatever cost to themselves. Sometimes they succeeded in concealing themselves at great personal peril on the roof or in some obscure part of the building, emerging to make their protest during the speech of the Cabinet Minister. Sometimes they led a crowd of people up to the door of the meeting-house, and were only prevented by a strong detachment of police from forcing an entrance. Then Cabinet Ministers ringed themselves round with detectives, and barricades were erected in the streets to keep off the approach of the crowd. The women's answer to this was a stone which went crashing through the building in which the Cabinet Minister was speaking. Women also took other opportunities of reminding the Prime Minister and his colleagues that if they shut off all ordinary means of access, extraordinary means would be adopted, and that they must not expect to escape rough handling themselves if they continued to allow their subordinates to ill-treat women for persisting in their demand for an interview.

Moreover, as deputation after deputation was arrested and imprisoned for long terms for "obstructing the police," women determined to take a step forward and by an act of symbolic violence to challenge the working of the law. Thus the thirteenth deputation contained among its hundred members a dozen who deliberately broke the windows of the Government buildings in Whitehall and received for it a month's imprisonment.

Further, the refusal to grant the rights of political prisoners was called in question, by mutiny against prison discipline, including the heroic hunger strike. Everyone knows how the Government tried to break the spirit of the women by the barbarous practice of forcible feeding in prison and how completely they failed.

Then came the General Election, in which the Suffragettes were responsible for losing the Government thirty or forty seats, thus making their majority dependent on Irish support. And finally a truce was declared, so that the Government in the absence of the din of war might be given a chance of reconsidering their false position and deciding at last to do justice to women.

In the following chapters I shall deal with the criticisms which these militant methods have provoked.

CHAPTER XI.

THE ELECTION POLICY OF THE W.S.P.U.

The Election Policy of the Women's Social and Political Union has been criticised by friends and opponents of woman suffrage. It has been argued (1) that it was *immoral*—or at least *unfair*; (2) that it was *inexpedient*; (3) that it was *ineffectual*.

The essence of the W.S.P.U. policy has been its anti-Government character. It has passed right over the individual merits and opinions and pledges of the candidates themselves and has attacked the Government candidate, urging the electors to vote against him solely in his capacity as the nominee of the Government. The W.S.P.U. has not supported any other candidate, and where two or more such have been in the field it has offered no further advice to the electors as to how they should vote.

“Immoral and Unfair.”

Critics suggest that it is immoral to call upon Liberals to vote against Liberal principles, and

that to ask electors to vote against the Government nominee, whatever his views on the suffrage, is unfair both to the Government, who are not really responsible for the delay in granting woman suffrage, and to the Liberal candidate, who may be an ardent supporter of the cause.

These critics forget that it cannot be immoral to place the greater before the less. The true representation of the people, who have to obey the laws and pay the taxes, is a Liberal principle more fundamental and more vital than any of those for which the Liberal Party have contended during the years of suffragette opposition. Nor can anyone acquainted with modern-day politics fail to recognise that it is the Government which has been responsible for blocking the enfranchisement of women. It and it alone has the command of the time of the House; no Bill can possibly be carried unless directly supported by the Government, or at any rate favoured by it to the extent of being granted "special facilities" in the way of time for discussion. It has been the Government which has persistently refused time for the discussion of a woman suffrage Bill, and has aggravated this refusal by its treatment of woman suffragists when they have sought to lay their case before its members. The demand, therefore, that electors

shall vote against the Government on this issue is the demand that they shall realise that this issue transcends all others, and that they shall strike a blow at a Government which fails to allow it to be dealt with.

As to the suggestion that it is unfair to deal with a man, not according to his own personal views, but according to those of his party, these critics do not realise that when a man goes down to a constituency as a Liberal nominee he has already abrogated his personal standpoint and accepted the standpoint of the Liberal Party. He is like a soldier going into battle under a certain flag; by that flag he must stand or fall, and he cannot plead immunity from attack on the ground that he does not approve of the war in which he is fighting. A Liberal candidate has already ranged himself on the side of the Liberal Government by acceptance of party support, and he must expect to gain by the merits and suffer for the demerits of that Government. So long as he elects to serve under the Liberal flag—and no true woman suffragist ought to be willing to place himself in this position so long as the Liberal Government blocks the enfranchisement of women—he cannot escape the odium which attaches to the Government on that account.

“Inexpedient.”

“But,” say the critics, “even if it be not *immoral* or *unfair*, it is at any rate *inexpedient*, because it may lead to the exclusion of a supporter of woman suffrage from the House of Commons and the inclusion of an opponent, whereas the true policy would be to support ‘sympathisers’ and oppose those who declare themselves ‘unfavourable,’ whatever be their party flag.” Those who argue in this way do not realise that legislation is carried to-day not by the private member but by the Government. The private member is merely a counter of a certain colour; he either is a supporter of the Government or an opponent. Mr. Sidney Low states the case very clearly in his book, “The Governance of England.” He says:—

A Member of Parliament is elected to vote for a particular Ministry or to vote against it; he is the delegate of his constituents.

They do not send him to Parliament to exercise his independence. They would be particularly annoyed and irritated if he did, and they scrutinise his votes with jealous care in order that they make take him to task very speedily, and with no superfluous delicacy or reserve, if he shows any dangerous tendency in that direction. And the modern M.P. understands the conditions of his political existence so well that in point of fact he hardly ever does vote against his party on any party issue when his own side is in office.

The (rank and file) materialist is only in a limited sense a

legislator; he has scarcely any power to make new laws, or to prevent them being made, or to amend old ones; he is not consulted on Bills which Ministers propose to introduce; he sees them only when they come from the printers, and then he knows that, whether he likes them or not, he will be expected to support them by his vote in the Lobbies.

This being the position of the private member when once he is returned to the House of Commons, the question which is presented to a body of electors at a by-election is not whether they prefer the views of Mr. X. to those of Mr. Y. or Mr. Z., but whether they prefer the views of the party leaders to which Mr. X. belongs to those of the party leaders of Mr. Y. or Mr. Z. They are required, in fact, to pass a vote of "confidence" or "no confidence" in the Government of the day.

In 1908 Mr. Stanger's Bill for the enfranchisement of women passed its second reading by the overwhelming majority of 179 (271—92). It would have made very little difference if that majority had been increased to 189 by the inclusion of a few more nominal supporters in the House or reduced to 169 by the exclusion of a few of those already there; but it would have made all the difference if the Government could have been persuaded to withdraw its opposition to the further discussion of the Bill. The only form of

persuasion which Governments understand is a hostile vote at an election. The defeat, therefore, of a Government candidate, *even a professed friend of woman suffrage*, is a tremendous gain for the suffrage cause if it helps to convince the Government of the unpopularity involved in continued opposition to the enfranchisement of women.

“Ineffectual.”

“That may be so,” say some critics, “but as a matter of fact women turn hardly any votes, and the Government do not recognise any of their defeats as due to this cause.”

Of course none are so blind as those who will not see, and it may be that the Government are still incredulous of the effect women have had in causing the defeat of their candidates, but it is surely too late in the day to suggest that women do not influence, and influence largely, the votes given by electors! This is a question of fact, and on a question of fact, evidence alone is of any value—evidence covering not merely one by-election, but a series of elections. Such evidence is obviously precluded from the present book by limitation of space, but those who wish can verify the facts for themselves by searching the local

newspapers during the elections of the past four years. At the beginning of 1909 I collected the evidence for the by-elections of the year 1908 and published them in a pamphlet ("The By-election Policy of the W.S.P.U.," *The Woman's Press*, 1d.), showing conclusively the weight attached locally to the women's intervention during that year. In February of the present year I estimated that the W.S.P.U. had been responsible for the defeat of between thirty and forty Government candidates at the General Election; this estimate received unexpected corroboration in a hostile quarter, where it was stated that in 10 per cent. of the constituencies woman suffrage played a *prominent* part in the election. The strength of the women's opposition is also attested by the fact that it has been by no means uncommon for Liberal candidates or their friends prior to an election to make a "special appeal for mercy" to the leaders of the W.S.P.U., in the vain hope of staving off the opposition of the Union, which they knew would be fatal to their interest.

Critics of the election policy of the W.S.P.U. have entirely failed to shake the sound diagnosis of political strategy on which it is founded or the inexorable logic by which it is built up; and every day that passes sees a more nearly unanimous

verdict on the part of friend and foe that this policy, wielded aright, constitutes a formidable weapon in the suffrage cause.

CHAPTER XII.

"PESTERING" CABINET MINISTERS.

A very hot fire of criticism has been directed against the deliberate policy of the Women's Social and Political Union of *pestering* Cabinet Ministers. Regardless of the fact that Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman himself recommended women "to go on pestering people," Liberals have taken women to task for presuming to pester Cabinet Ministers, and have urged that persuasion would be better than coercion. The record of forty years, however, showed that persuasion had failed and that something was required—*analogous to the importance of the widow*—to make it harder for Cabinet Ministers to refuse, than to give, justice to women.

Routed on the major issues, critics have taken refuge in attacking the minor details of tactics. At first, when "pestering" took the form of interrupting Cabinet Ministers' political speeches, they argued that all such interruption was improper. This criticism on the part of Liberals has since

been completely shown up by the approbation which they have bestowed on the Liberal "voice" which so frequently interrupted Conservative speakers at the General Election. Such interruptions, though declared to be "an attack on the sacred right of free speech" when made by women at Liberal meetings, have been pronounced to be thoroughly correct by the chief Liberal journals when Liberal men have interrupted Conservative speakers. Moreover, such interruptions have been from time immemorial the recognised means of heckling political speakers in this country, and were not employed by women until pertinent questions, addressed *after the conclusion of the principal speech*, had on many occasions been treated with total disregard.

Other critics complained that heckling was not confined to hostile Ministers but was employed even against professing friends. These critics seem to be unaware of the constitutional doctrine of joint Cabinet responsibility, by which every Cabinet Minister is held responsible for the whole action of the Cabinet, and has only one means—that of resignation—of putting this responsibility aside. Others argued that the women's protests were alienating sympathy, a fallacy based on the supposition that the whole world took the same

view as a few irate and hysterical stewards. Others, with Mr. Haldane, taunted the women with pursuing a policy of pinpricks and inquired why they did not do something serious, a taunt which the women rightly treated with disdain. Interrupters stand their chance of rough usage at the hands of the stewards at meetings, and this was meted out to women with full measure by incensed Liberals, egged on by such atrocious declarations from the platform as that of Mr. Lloyd George, "Let them be ruthlessly flung out!"

Excluded from Meetings.

Then came the time when Cabinet Ministers tried to avoid the heckling of women by confining their audiences to men—a device for avoiding the importunity of the unenfranchised, which, it may be noted by the way, is only applicable when the unenfranchised belong to a class distinguishable at sight from the enfranchised. Women were at once confronted with the alternative of abandoning their attack or pressing it home in new ways. Realising the terrible consequences of abandonment, they decided to adopt the latter course. Four ways of continuing the protest presented themselves, and all of these were adopted.

First, they sought out Cabinet Ministers at

other times and places and laid their demand before them. Critics have fastened upon this action and denounced it as bad manners. But bad manners may be justified by sufficiently urgent circumstances. A man who shuts up the highway through his grounds must not complain when the public trespass on his private property or tear down his fences; a man who commits a crime must not complain when the police force themselves on his presence; a man who fights in an army has to take the risk not merely of death in the field, but of the petty annoyances of war. So when Cabinet Ministers closed their meetings to women, they had only themselves to blame when women took other occasions of reaching them.

Secondly, women entered the halls by strategy and delivered their protest from the roof, or from under the platform, or from elsewhere. These tactics have been denounced as foolish, unwomanly, and unpolitical. The simple fact remains, however, that they have been the means of bringing home to the speaker and to the audience in an unmistakable way the demand of women for the vote; while the extraordinary dexterity and courage displayed in many instances by the women have won for them the hearty appreciation of local public opinion.

Thirdly, at the suggestion of women, men friendly to the cause have heckled Cabinet Ministers at their meetings, and have been subjected to gross ill-usage at the hands of the stewards and flung out into the streets. This for a pertinent interruption on Votes for Women, while interrupters on other questions have been treated with respect. A critic, in the person of Mr. Lloyd George, has not hesitated to say that these men were paid for their work. This statement is totally false.

Fourthly, women have headed street demonstrations outside the meetings with the view of entering them by force. Also, when completely barred out, they have sent a material protest singing into the hall in the shape of a well-directed stone. These actions have brought them within the law, and many of them have been arrested. It has also called forth most extraordinary precautions—an immensely increased police force, street barricades, and the use of subterranean passages by Cabinet Ministers. The women's popularity has been demonstrated by these precautions (which would be unnecessary if the crowd were hostile), while the unpopularity of Ministers has been increased by the heavy bill for police protection which the local people have had subsequently to foot. Critics,

however, fasten on the lawless character of the women's action and the danger arising to the public. Leaving to the next chapter a detailed consideration of these charges, where they are met with in reference to a similar case, I shall confine myself here to pointing out that revolutions cannot be made with rosewater, and that the blame for creating them rests, not with those whose sense of liberty compels them to rebel against injustice, but upon those who by denying justice make revolution the only available means to obtain redress.

Finally, individual women acting on their own responsibility have carried out isolated means of protest by still more vigorous action. With regard to these it is only necessary to point out that in every franchise agitation individuals have exceeded the counsels of moderation laid down by the responsible leaders, and the present agitation is no exception to the rule. But, speaking generally, the struggle has been marked by a self-restraint and a calm deliberation which will make it memorable in years to come.

In fact, this very characteristic has been selected by some critics for a special taunt. "If it was men acting in hot blood," they have said, "this agitation might be serious; but, bah! it is only women playing at revolution." Such criticism is

not merely false but exceedingly wicked. Women are not men, who act in hot blood, careless of what they do. Rather they weigh with careful thought every fresh move that is undertaken so that it shall not exceed by one iota that which the circumstances demand. And it is for this reason that their revolution possesses such irresistible strength.

CHAPTER XIII.

CRITICISM OF "RAIDS ON PARLIAMENT."

Of all the militant methods none have attracted more attention than the deputations to the Prime Minister at the House of Commons, or "the raids," as they are colloquially called. At certain times in their history, generally after some great meeting, at which the demand for the vote has been expressed (as, for instance, after the monster Hyde Park demonstration of 1908), the Women's Social and Political Union have requested Mr. Asquith to receive a deputation. *This request he has invariably refused.* Not only so, but since he has been Prime Minister he has refused to see any and every deputation of woman suffragists, to whatever society they may belong; thus he has refused the "constitutional" Suffragists, the head-mistresses, the women doctors, and others.

Faced with this refusal, the W.S.P.U. have endeavoured to get Mr. Asquith to reconsider his decision and to appoint time and place to see them.

When this failed they have appointed time and place themselves, and gone forward to see him. To stop them he has called out the police, but they have persisted in trying to enter the House of Commons, where he was. In consequence a conflict has taken place between the women and the police, eventually leading to the arrest and imprisonment of the women.

Critics say that the women have no legal right to force an interview on the Prime Minister, and that if he does not wish to see them they must abandon the attempt; that the action which they have actually taken is lawless, unwomanly, violent, and fraught with danger to the public.

In saying this they do not realise that a fundamental human right is in question which women as well as men are bound to stand up for at the peril of losing not merely their own liberty but the liberty of all men and women of future generations.

It has been, up till now, the universal practice of rulers of men to give opportunities to the governed to lay their grievances before them in the hope of obtaining redress. This has been recognised all down the ages, even by the world's despots, because it was clearly seen that to refuse to do so would be to close the safety valve and to invite revolution.

In this country the right of the subject to petition the king was expressly provided by the Bill of Rights, and all imprisonments for so doing were declared illegal.

To-day by the change of constitutional practice the Prime Minister has become the virtual ruler of the country; it is with him, and with him alone, that the decision rests as to which laws shall be made for the government of the people. And it is the universal practice that where a deputation of men representing any large body of feeling desire to obtain an interview with him, that interview is granted at a time and place which he may choose. Not only so, but even on occasions the Prime Minister has been forced against his wish to receive an audience of men at *their* convenience, as was the case with a recent deputation of men from the Woolwich Arsenal, who insisted upon being received by Mr. Asquith at the House of Commons on a certain evening and succeeded in overriding his original refusal.

The practice exists because to adopt any other course would be to invite riot and revolutionary methods. And in the case of men a Prime Minister who deliberately refused access to himself would be held primarily to blame for any trouble which might ensue. But if this is the case with men,

who, having the ballot in their possession, have other means of obtaining redress, how much more is it true of women, who, being excluded from the vote, have no other means? It is evident that the right of laying their grievances before their virtual ruler in person is an essential of liberty itself. And when Mr. Asquith deliberately and repeatedly refused to give any opportunity at any time or place to receive any body of women who desired to lay before him the great and growing feeling of women on the question of the suffrage, he must have realised that he was taking a step likely to be fraught with exceedingly serious consequences. When a man dams back a flowing stream he is responsible when at last the water breaks its barriers and floods the surrounding country. When a man blocks the high road with his fences he is responsible when the public, to enforce their right of way, tear them down and invade his private property.

So when Mr. Asquith has attempted to bar women out from laying their grievances before him, with him lies the responsibility for the necessary action which the women have taken. For women have rightly realised that even if their action be lawless, then it is better to break the law in defence of liberty, than by a tame submission to

unjust laws to allow liberties to be filched away. As the Right Hon. W. E. Gladstone said: "I am sorry to say that if no instructions had ever been addressed in political crises to the people of this country except to remember to hate violence and love order and exercise patience, the liberties of this country would never have been attained."

As to the charge of unwomanliness, the record of the greatest women of the past—of Joan of Arc, of Florence Nightingale, of Josephine Butler, of a multitude of others—shows that this charge is always made against those who, regardless of the consequences to themselves, have bravely encountered the forces of opposition and pushed forward the cause of humanity.

As to the charge of violence, women point with pride to the remarkable moderation with which the campaign has been conducted by them. "If this had been a men's battle," a policeman was heard to remark once during a *raid*, "there would have been bloodshed long before this." In fact, when men are in earnest it is almost expected that they shall be violent about it. Sir Rufus Isaacs, speaking recently at Reading, made a kind of apology for the absence of rioting in the present anti-Lords campaign, and excused it on the ground that men had now got the franchise. Violence on the part of

men is regarded under sufficiently provocative circumstances as a sign of virility.

Women are fully alive to the possibility of danger to the public; that is why, in the face of the strongest provocation, they abstained for years from anything in the nature of aggressive violence in the course of their *raids*, and contented themselves with passive resistance to the police, combined with an attempt to push their way through them.

At length, however, finding that the technical offence of obstructing the police was punished by long sentences of three months in the second division (as an alternative to the impossible condition of being bound over to keep the peace), they decided that more vigorous action was necessary. Even then they were careful to avoid risk of injury to individuals, and contented themselves with breaking the windows of empty Government buildings.

Where great crowds come together it is, of course, impossible to banish all element of risk; but in every great cause, fought out on the wide stage of life, danger is always present not merely to the actors but to the onlookers. Women have not lightly come into this conflict. All the greatest risks they cheerfully accept themselves; by remark-

able self-restraint and moderation they have reduced all risk to outsiders to a minimum. But they know that liberty and honour are greater than peace and safety, and that whatever is necessary must be faced in the great cause. For in the freedom of women lies the hope of the people, and the uplifting of the nation.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE PRISON MUTINY AND THE HUNGER STRIKE.

Of all the actions of the Suffragettes none have been so widely misunderstood as the prison mutiny and the hunger strike. Even among those who have nothing but admiration for the women who have faced ill-usage and imprisonment for protesting at Cabinet Ministers' meetings, or for taking part in deputations to the Prime Minister at the House of Commons, there are many who regard the hunger strike not merely as tactically and perhaps morally wrong, but as justifying to some extent the statement that the militant Suffragists are hysterical and unbalanced.

This criticism is partly due to the fact that the prison mutiny and hunger strike were the latest phase of militancy—and it has been a noteworthy feature at every stage of the present campaign that critics have fastened upon the latest militant methods for attack, while condoning and even sometimes expressing approval of earlier militant

methods—and partly due to the fact that the outside public have never properly realised that there was an important principle underlying the apparently unaccountable behaviour of the Suffragettes in prison. To incur *wantonly* additional punishment in prison, to undergo *gratuitously* the terrible ordeal of starvation, to submit to the torture of forcible feeding rather than eat rationally—these might be evidences of hysteria; but to determine, for a sufficiently important purpose, on a course of action which leads to these terrible consequences, to pursue this course of action without flinching, and to carry it through to the bitter end—these are evidences of a well-balanced mind and an heroic and untameable spirit.

Political Prisoners in the Past.

To understand the action of the Suffragettes it is necessary to go back in history and trace in brief the treatment which has been adopted in past centuries and in other countries towards those who, like the present-day Suffragettes, have incurred imprisonment, not on account of degrading crimes implying moral turpitude, but on account of actions taken with a political object.

In ancient days those who had conspired to

reform the Government were dealt with barbarously; first they were tortured, then they were killed, and finally their bodies were mutilated. Later on, though the death penalty was still exacted, the savage accompaniments were omitted. As times advanced public opinion demanded greater and greater differentiation between the treatment of ordinary criminals punished for their selfish anti-social actions, and that of men or women who had run counter to the law in consequence of their political views.

Even in the Bastille we find the political prisoners given considerable privileges; thus Parades was allowed to have what books he pleased, to carry on correspondence, and to be visited by his friends. In the early part of last century Cobbett was imprisoned in this country; not only did he have books and correspondence, but he was actually allowed to have the constant company of one of his children, who took up his abode in the prison to be with him. The condition of the political prisoners of the Neapolitan King "Bomba" in the "forties" raised a storm of indignation in this country, because, *though they had certain privileges as to writing and reading*, they were in other respects treated as common criminals and subjected to unhealthy and degrading conditions.

Coming to recent events, we find that Dr. Jameson had a special suite of apartments; the Irish agitators had frequent opportunities for intercourse; Mr. Ginnell, M.P., wrote a book in prison.

From the commencement, in dealing with the Suffrage prisoners, the Government departed from this honourable tradition. Christabel Pankhurst and Annie Kenney, in October, 1905, were sentenced to the third division in Strangways Gaol, Manchester, and were thus classed with the lowest criminals. Again in July, 1906, Annie Kenney and others suffered imprisonment in the second division (a slightly better class, but still totally different from that allotted to political offenders). In October, 1906, eleven more women were arrested, and ten were sent to the second division and one to the third. This time considerable feeling was aroused, because among the number was the daughter of Richard Cobden. Liberal members appealed to the Home Secretary, Mr. Gladstone, and he made representations to the magistrate and they were transferred to the first division and received treatment approximating to that of political prisoners. For some twelve months this practice prevailed. Then once again the old method was adopted: Suffrage prisoners were sent to the

second and in some cases to the third division, and there suffered the full treatment of prison discipline. Visitors and correspondence were only allowed at rare intervals, and the latter was always open to inspection by the authorities. Permission was refused to Christabel Pankhurst to write a book in prison, though it was not to have been published until after she came out.

At first woman suffrage prisoners accepted without protest the punishment which was meted out to them; their compassion for the ordinary prisoners (many of whom for quite trivial offences were being treated in a way which would evidently unfit them for life when they came out) prompted them to protest rather against the whole system of prison treatment than against the absence of differentiation in their favour. But as time went on they realised that by remaining silent on this matter they were allowing the traditions of proper treatment of political offenders to be abrogated, and in order that future political prisoners might not suffer it was necessary to protest.

At first their protest was confined to words; the Home Secretary was appealed to. He refused to make any change, and offered two excuses for his position—firstly, that the matter was one for the magistrate and not for himself; secondly, that the

offences were ordinary breaches of the law and to be punished as such. To these he subsequently added a third excuse to the effect that the suffrage prisoners had for a time been put into the first division but had abused their privileges. There is an element of inconsistency in these replies which are to some extent mutually destructive, but in addition each can be directly answered.

The Home Secretary undoubtedly possesses the power by use of the Royal prerogative of mercy to order the removal of the prisoner to a higher class. Even without using this he can "make recommendations" to the magistrate, as was actually done in October, 1906. Moreover, the great majority of the prosecutions had been undertaken on behalf of the Chief Commissioner of the Police in London, who is directly under the Home Secretary. A representation by the Home Secretary that the prosecution only desired first division treatment would assuredly have been acted on. The *Manchester Guardian*, July 10th, 1908, thus summed up the position: "If the magistrates fail (to give first-class treatment) the Home Secretary should make good the omission, for whatever the technicalities of the matter may be, it is quite certain that the Home Secretary has the practical power to do so." This disposes of Mr. Gladstone's first excuse.

What Constitutes a Political Offence.

With regard to his second assertion, that the Suffragettes are not political offenders—we have the decision of an English Court in the year 1891 in the extradition case of Rex v. Castioni, in which it was laid down that an offence is political if it is committed with a political object, even though it be the offence of murder itself. Moreover, we have the test offered by The Rt. Hon. W. E. Gladstone, of public opinion, whether in the eyes of the public the offender is considered guilty of moral turpitude. According to both these, all the women suffrage prisoners had been political offenders. Finally, in the particular case of the sentence on Mrs. Pankhurst and ninety-three other women in 1909, the magistrate said that it would be set aside if a certain political question—whether Mrs. Pankhurst was exercising a legally enforceable right in insisting on personally presenting a petition to the Prime Minister—were decided by the High Court in her favour. The Court decided against her on the political issue, thereby confirming the sentence of the magistrate but undoubtedly making her a political offender.

Finally, as to Mr. Gladstone's third excuse, that Suffrage prisoners abused their privileges when in

the first division : even if it were true, it is an unheard-of principle in British law to punish A because B has behaved badly. But in reality there is not a shadow of truth in it; no charge was ever made at the time, nor has any charge whatever been formulated since.

More Vigorous Action.

Nevertheless, these excuses were all that Mr. Gladstone furnished, and the continued protests of the Women's Social and Political Union, extending over eighteen months, with an occasional voice raised on their behalf in the Press, went unheeded. It was then that the Suffragettes determined on vigorous action.

Some little indication of what would be done had been given a few months previously. When Mrs. Pankhurst and Christabel Pankhurst had been in prison together in the autumn of 1908, Mrs. Pankhurst had claimed the right to speak to her daughter while on exercise. This led to a severe reproof from the wardresses, which roused the anger of the other suffragettes present, who made a protest. Punishments were meted out all round, and Mrs. Pankhurst was kept in close confinement for several days; at length, however, the Govern-

ment gave in and an order was sent to Holloway that Mrs. Pankhurst was to be permitted to talk to her daughter at stated times.

It was not, however, till June, 1909, that prison tactics were decided on by the members of the W.S.P.U. as a definite policy. The essential feature was that a claim was to be made for treatment as political offenders; if this was disregarded a protest was to be made inside the walls of the prison. This would take the shape of a passive resistance to prison regulations, to wearing prison dress, to confinement in separate cells, to the routine of prison life; and this was to be followed by breaking the windows of the cells—at once a vigorous protest against prison discipline and a concrete and effective method of remedying a serious abuse, the absence of proper ventilation.

All these methods were, in fact, carried out; but by the heroic courage of one woman a still more terrible method had been put into operation. Miss Wallace Dunlop adopted, as the strongest protest she could make, a method used in the Russian prisons by the prisoners—the hunger strike. The hunger strike is passive resistance carried to its supreme limit. It offers no active resistance to wrong, but it frankly stakes life in the effort to win justice.

Miss Wallace Dunlop said in effect to the Government: "I hold the rights of political prisoners so sacred that I am willing to die in their defence; choose, therefore, between doing justice and allowing me to die in prison."

It was a terrible step to take, involving untold suffering as well as risk of life, but Miss Wallace Dunlop, with a full sense of the seriousness of what she was doing, had made up her mind and intended to go through with what she had undertaken. In spite of threats and cajoling, in spite of great physical distress, she remained firm. At the end of four days the Government gave in. They would not give her political treatment, it is true, but equally they would not let her die in prison. They ordered her release.

Thirteen other woman suffrage prisoners who went to Holloway a few days later also adopted the hunger strike. But first they carried out the protest against prison discipline which they had premeditated. For this they had to face the severe rigours of prison punishment—close confinement for several days without exercise, in narrow, airless and semi-dark cells; and under these conditions many of them faced hunger for three, four, five and some for over six days. In the end they all won; their spirit proved triumphant over physical

suffering. They were released by order of the Government lest that great releaser, Death, should free them from their bondage before their sentences had expired.

CHAPTER XV.

FORCIBLE FEEDING IN PRISON.

When the annals of these times come to be written historians will stand aghast at the extraordinary and inhuman method by which the Government attempted to put an end to the hunger strike, and they will wonder how in this civilised age such a course of action could be permitted by the people of the country. But beyond all this their thoughts will be filled with reverent admiration for the women who for the sake of their cause were prepared to endure so terrible an ordeal.

In the last chapter I explained how the prison mutiny and hunger strike originated in the determined stand made by women against the refusal of the Government to grant them the recognised treatment for political prisoners. The Government having paid no attention to words, had to be made to listen by deeds. The prison mutiny represented active resistance, and the hunger strike the supreme limit of passive resistance.

It is not possible in this book to find space to give the minor details of the story of the conflict between women and the Government which raged round the question of prison treatment, to answer one and all the little criticisms which have been made, to explain and clear up every one of the little misunderstandings as to the exact form which the prison mutiny took. It must suffice that I have shown the essential principle which underlay the action of the women and the steadfast single-mindedness with which they carried it out at extraordinary personal sacrifice. For the rest I would remind readers that the accounts which appeared in the ordinary press cannot be relied on for accuracy, and that if they desire to know the whole truth they must check every account given there with the corresponding account given at the time in the columns of *VOTES FOR WOMEN*.

For some time Mr. Gladstone continued with the policy of releasing the women from prison after they had been several days without food, but in September, 1909, he determined to adopt feeding by force. In this he had two objects in view. In the first place he hoped that he would be able to detain their bodies within the prison walls for the full prison sentence; and in the second place he hoped to break down their spirit; for feeding by

force applied to a sane resisting patient without any of the alleviations to be found in a hospital, is an intense torture calculated to test to the uttermost the nerve and endurance of those to whom it is applied. In his first object he was partially successful; some of the women he was able to detain to the end of their sentences of a fortnight, a month, six weeks, and even, in the case of Miss Marsh, three months; others like Mrs. Leigh he was forced to release after only a part of their sentence had been served, because the prison doctor reported that their lives would not much longer hold out; others had to be released at once because in their case the dangerous operation of forcible feeding would almost certainly have proved fatal. In Mr. Gladstone's second object he utterly failed; he did not break the spirit of a single woman; though thirty-six women were subjected to forcible feeding, every woman remained steadfast; every woman came out of prison more determined than ever to fight for the cause unto the end. She went in a suffragette, she came out a living flame.

What is Forcible Feeding ?

The horrible practice of forcible feeding differed in different prisons and with different prisoners. In all cases the woman was seized by a number of

wardresses, forced into a chair and either strapped down or held down by overpowering numbers. Then, in some cases, her mouth was prized open by a steel instrument and a tube forced down her throat into her stomach, and down this liquid food was poured. In other cases food was poured in from a feeding-cup, the throat being pinched to make her swallow. A third method was to pass a tube up through the nostrils and down into the stomach. Every one of these methods caused intense suffering and retching, amounting in some cases to sickness, continued, as in the case of Jane Warton, during the whole period of the operation.

Some of the prison doctors endeavoured not to inflict more pain than the disgusting nature of the operation necessitated, others were frankly callous, others directly brutal. In many cases far more food was poured in than the prisoner could possibly digest. In many cases the necessary heart examination was omitted. One doctor admitted that he had lost his temper. Another slapped the prisoner's face because she was unavoidably sick. These outrages were equalled or surpassed by the visiting magistrates of Manchester Gaol, who had the hose-pipe turned on to a suffrage prisoner in Manchester for barricading her cell to prevent the operation taking place. To such depths did the officials sink

in their fruitless endeavour to break the spirit of the women in prison.

The Legal Aspect.

The Women's Social and Political Union took the earliest possible opportunity of questioning the legality of the proceedings by an action brought on behalf of Mrs. Leigh against the Home Secretary, the Governor, and the Doctor of Birmingham Gaol, where she was forcibly fed. At first Mr. Gladstone placed obstacles in the way of Mrs. Leigh's solicitor entering the prison to take her instructions, but he was forced to give way. The case was tried on December 9th, 1909, by the Lord Chief Justice and a special jury.

One of the earliest points to come out in the trial was the direct responsibility of the Home Secretary. Previously Mr. Gladstone in his answers in the House of Commons had endeavoured to shift the burden on to the shoulders of the prison doctors, but on this occasion it was admitted by his own counsel that he himself had directed, or at least sanctioned, the whole proceedings.

It was agreed by the medical evidence both for the plaintiff and for the defence, though they differed as to the degree of pain inflicted by the

operation and also as to the danger of serious consequences involved, that it would not be proper to operate thus on a sane, free patient without his or her consent, and that in order to do so it would be necessary to certify that that patient was insane. It was further agreed on both sides that there was no question regarding the sanity of Mrs. Leigh. The argument put forward by the defendants was that in prison the normal rights of the prisoner in this matter were in abeyance, and that the medical authorities had a right, on the instructions of the Home Secretary, to operate in this way on the body of the prisoner without his or her consent. Their view of the law was accepted by the Lord Chief Justice on the ground that it was necessary for the authorities of the prison to take this course in order to enable them to safeguard the life and health of the prisoner. He accordingly refused to allow the main question to go to the jury at all, and only submitted to them a minor point as to which they could hardly have come to any other verdict than that in favour of the defendants, which they actually did. By this decision of the Lord Chief Justice a person once committed to prison is deprived of one of the essential human rights, the right to forbid an operation upon his body without his consent.

Lady Constance Lytton and Jane Warton.

As soon as it became known that Mrs. Leigh was undergoing feeding by force in Birmingham Gaol, Lady Constance Lytton determined to take her stand beside her by repeating, as far as possible, in Newcastle the offence for which Mrs. Leigh was imprisoned in Birmingham. She was arrested and sentenced to prison and at once commenced the hunger strike, but instead of being fed by force she was examined by a specialist from London. Her heart was pronounced weak and she was released after fifty-six hours. Mr. Gladstone denied all imputation of being a "respector of persons," saying that a weak heart was the sole cause of her release.

But his veracity was to be subjected to a severer test than he anticipated. A few months later, in January, 1910, stories of exceptional brutality perpetrated in Liverpool Prison on Selina Martin and Leslie Hall reached her ears, and she at once determined to place herself by the side of the women. This time she disguised herself and adopted the feigned name of Jane Warton. Thus fortified against detection, she went into the streets of Liverpool, and led a march of the men of the city against the prison. She was arrested and sent to gaol for a fortnight, the authorities suspecting

nothing. Arrived there, she refused to eat prison food, and was ordered to the punishment cell on the third day because, as a political prisoner, she refused to do hard labour. On the fourth day she was told she was to be forcibly fed. No specialist was sent down to see her; no examination of her heart took place until after she had been fed by force three times, and even then the examination was only of a perfunctory character, and she was pronounced quite sound. The operation was continued for several days further, and then an order was sent from the Home Office for her release, whether because her identity was already suspected or because her condition had actually become exceedingly serious is not definitely known.

Mr. Churchill and Forcible Feeding.

Shortly after the release of Jane Warton the other suffragist prisoners were also released, and not long afterwards Mr. Gladstone, who had previously been appointed Governor of South Africa, left the Home Office, and Mr. Winston Churchill stepped into his shoes. Meanwhile a "truce" had been declared by the Women's Social and Political Union, and there were therefore no more Woman Suffrage prisoners.

One of the first acts of the new Home Secretary was to introduce the following new prison rule:—

In the case of any offender of the second or third division whose previous character is good, and who has been convicted of or committed to prison for an offence not involving dishonesty, cruelty, indecency, or serious violence, the Prison Commissioners may allow such amelioration of the conditions prescribed in the foregoing rules as the Secretary of State may approve, in respect of the wearing of prison clothing, bathing, hair-cutting, cleaning of cells, employment, exercise, books, and otherwise, provided that no such amelioration shall be greater than that granted under the rules for offenders of the first division.

This rule is evidently a step in the right direction, though in the opinion of Women Suffragists it by no means carries the prison treatment of women political prisoners to a wholly satisfactory position.

The prospects of the present Woman Suffrage Bill, introduced by the Conciliation Committee into the House of Commons, are so good that there are reasonable grounds for hoping that there will be no occasion for the resumption of hostilities between women and the Government, but in the regrettable event of this compromise breaking down it is impossible to say what form the conflict which rages round the question of the treatment of women political offenders in prison may take in the future.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE TRUCE AND THE NEW BILL.

In most great contests extending over periods of years, intervals occur in which the combatants consider that they can obtain their objects better by a temporary suspension of hostilities than by continuous employment of arms. Particularly is this the case when the attacking force are not seeking the complete annihilation of the defenders but the cession by them of a certain position. So long as hostilities are actually being continued the defenders from a sense of pride and from force of habit are wont to continue to refuse to cede the position although they have already realised (in consequence of the vigour of the attack) that it is no longer tenable; but a truce provides them with the proper opportunity for reflection and enables them to cede with a good grace what it would have required a protracted struggle to wrest from them by sheer force.

The truth of this principle was realised by the leaders of the Women's Social and Political Union

when, in February, 1910, following on the general election, they declared a truce between themselves and the Government so far as all the militant activities were concerned with the exception of opposition at the by-elections. For four years the attack had been carried on with rapidly growing strength by the Union, a fact which was openly recognised by Cabinet Ministers when they decided to close the doors of their "public" meetings and to come and go *like a thief in the night*, choosing unfrequented byways and surrounded by a *posse* of police. The General Election was just over, in which the opposition of the Suffragettes had been responsible for causing the Liberal Party to lose some thirty seats more than would have otherwise been the case, thus making the Irish the dominating factor in the political situation. A new Parliament was at Westminster unhampered by the traditions of the past and prepared to look at the Suffrage question with new eyes. Moreover, it had been elected at a time when the principle of Woman Suffrage was well before the country and when the candidates had ample opportunity of satisfying themselves that the general feeling of the constituencies was friendly to the woman's claim. The comparative weakness of the Government and the recognised strength of

the Women's Social and Political Union provided just that opportunity when a truce is likely to be beneficial; while at the same time militancy was held always in reserve.

At first no concrete results were forthcoming. Though a number of private members were prepared to introduce a Woman Suffrage Bill if opportunity arose, none of them had the fortune to secure a place in the ballot which would have enabled the second reading to be discussed. Moreover, the whole Parliamentary situation appeared so critical that it seemed quite likely that a second General Election would follow close on the heels of the first.

However, an unseen force was at work inside the House of Commons in the shape of a Woman Suffrage Conciliation Committee, which was endeavouring to draft a Bill which would be acceptable to all parties. At the same time the Parliamentary situation so far cleared that the impending second General Election was postponed, and again further postponed owing to the regretted death of King Edward. Also in the presence of death the sordidness of party strife came home to the minds of politicians, and on every side there were indications that a peaceful solution of critical problems would be attempted.

It was at this juncture that the Woman Suffrage Conciliation Committee launched its Bill, the text of which is as follows:—

PROVISIONAL TEXT OF A BILL.

TO EXTEND THE PARLIAMENTARY FRANCHISE TO WOMEN
OCCUPIERS.

Be it enacted, etc. :

1. Every woman possessed of a household qualification, or of a ten-pound occupation qualification, within the meaning of the Representation of the People Act (1884), shall be entitled to be registered as a voter, and when registered to vote for the county or borough in which the qualifying premises are situate.
2. For the purposes of this Act, a woman shall not be disqualified by marriage for being registered as a voter, provided that a husband and wife shall not both be qualified in respect of the same property.
3. This Act may be cited as "The Representation of the People Act, 1910."

It will be seen at once that this Bill is totally different *in form* from the Bill of the Woman Suffrage Societies referred to in Chapter I., which proposes simply to remove the sex barrier and to equalise the qualifications for men and women. The difference *in practical effect* is that while the Bill put forward by the women would give the vote to women who are (1) householders or occupiers, (2) owners, (3) lodgers, and (4) University Graduates, the new Bill will only

give the vote to the first class, viz., that of women householders or occupiers. But as this first class is far larger numerically than all the others put together (in the case of men it accounts for about 90 per cent. of the total vote, the three other classes together only accounting for about 10 per cent.) the difference in practical effect between the two Bills is not nearly so great as would be at first supposed.

A reference to Chapter I., in which a description of the present voting rights of men is given, will show what is required in order to qualify as a householder or as a £10 occupier. It should be especially noted that a householder need not occupy a whole house, also that there is no minimum rental. So that a woman occupying a single room in a house and paying for it only a shilling a week will be enabled to obtain the vote provided she has entire control of her portion of the house in the terms laid down by the legal decisions as to registration. It is computed that altogether the Bill would enfranchise about one million women.

The promoters of the Bill claim that by altering the text of the women's Bill they have produced a new Bill which is satisfactory to all parties in the House of Commons—that it is, as it were, the greatest common denominator—and will have no

opponents except those who are opposed to the whole principle of Votes for Women.

They conclude a carefully prepared memorandum on the Bill with the following words:—

We do not claim for our Bill that it is an ideal solution; it is a working compromise. Its single merit is that, in a way which no party can consider objectionable or unfair, it breaks down the barrier which at present excludes all women from citizen rights. It is against this insulting exclusion that women are protesting at present. For those women who care most about the Suffrage it is a secondary matter whether this or the other woman will be qualified under any given Bill. They are fighting for the status of their sex. Our basis has satisfied a Committee which includes both supporters and opponents of Adult Suffrage. It does not preclude a future advance towards Adult Suffrage; but neither does it render such an advance inevitable. It secures for women only those franchises which all parties regard as satisfactory. Failing Government action, we believe that it represents for many years to come the only practicable line of advance. The alternative is to wait, it may be for a generation, until one party or the other is strong enough and unanimous enough to force a contentious solution on party lines.

This question is as urgent as it is important. It is forty years since the first Suffrage Bill passed its second reading in the House of Commons. The patience and ability of the women of the older societies deserved an earlier reward. The failure of Parliaments to give effect to an opinion which they have repeatedly avowed would, if continued, justify women in complaining that in regard to them the Constitution had broken down. The painful struggle of the past four years is an experience which no one would wish to see repeated. However opinions may differ as to the methods by which

this cause has recently been advocated, everyone must deplore the fact that many women, whose high character gives them a commanding influence with their fellows, should be found in open hostility to the laws of the land, and that their capacity for devotion and self-sacrifice should be called forth in opposition to public order. Such a situation is directly contrary to the best interests of the State. It is with the object of preventing the continuance of this evil and of forwarding an act of justice, long overdue, that we ask for support for this Bill. The reform will be the more gracious if it comes by the united effort of men of all parties.

In proof of their assertion that the Bill is a "working compromise" and may become law "by consent," there is the large and influential list of names comprising the Committee, which is as follows:—

Chairman—The Rt. Hon. The Earl of Lytton.

Percy Alden, M.P., Sir Thomas Barclay, M.P., G. J. Bentham, M.P., The Rt. Hon. Thomas Burt, M.P., Noel Buxton, M.P., H. G. Chancellor, M.P., Sir William Crossley, M.P., Sir William Howell Davies, M.P., J. A. Dawes, M.P., Ellis G. Griffith, M.P., Sir D. Brynmor Jones, M.P., J. M. McCallum, M.P., C. A. McCurdy, M.P., The Rt. Hon. Sir Charles McLaren, M.P., Walter S. McLaren, M.P., Max Muspratt, M.P., F. Roch, M.P., A. H. Scott, M.P., Arthur Sherwell, M.P., Sir Albert Spicer, M.P., Sir George White,

M.P., J. H. Whitehouse, M.P., Aneurin Williams, M.P.

G. A. Arbuthnot, M.P., Sir William Bull, M.P., Captain Craig, M.P., H. Mallaby Deeley, M.P., H. S. Foster, M.P., E. A. Goulding, M.P., J. S. Harmood-Banner, M.P., F. Leverton-Harris, M.P., J. Henniker Heaton, M.P., Charles McArthur, M.P., The Hon. W. G. A. Ormsby-Gore, M.P., Basil Peto, M.P., Sir J. S. Randles, M.P., J. F. Remnant, M.P., Sir John Rolleston, M.P.

Stephen L. Gwynn, M.P., T. M. Kettle, M.P., J. C. Lardner, M.P., Hugh A. Law, M.P., Joseph P. Nannetti, M.P.

J. Keir Hardie, M.P., J. B. O'Grady, M.P., John Hodge, M.P., F. W. Jowett, M.P., David J. Shackleton, M.P., Philip Snowden, M.P.

Hon Secretary—H. N. Brailsford, 32, Well Walk, Hampstead, N.W.

It has also support in high places in every quarter of the House, including that of Sir Edward Grey, Hon. Alfred Lyttelton, Mr. George Barnes (Chairman of the Labour Party), and, according to the *Manchester Guardian*, Mr. Birrell, Mr. Churchill, and Mr. Arthur Henderson. Under these circumstances the Women's Social and Political Union and the other woman suffrage

societies are prepared to accept the Bill as a satisfactory instalment of their claim for equal franchise laws for men and women and to give it their hearty support.

Prospects of Success.

On the date at which this book goes finally to press (June 9th, 1910) the Bill has not actually been introduced into the House of Commons, but it is understood that it will be introduced by Mr. Shackleton on Tuesday, June 14th, and that the first reading will then take place. After that has been carried an application will be made to Mr. Asquith to grant facilities so that the Bill may have an opportunity of being carried through its remaining stages (second reading, Committee, report, and third reading) during the present Session.

As these stages will only require some two or two and a half days of full Parliamentary time, and as there is before the House no outstanding measures which have to be dealt with at length, there can be no real reason why time should not be found for it, and in view of the very strong support which the Bill is receiving from every side of the House it is difficult to believe that Mr. Asquith will place obstacles in the way. The

present provides a unique opportunity; to let it go by means to invite a further campaign of militancy more serious and more widespread and with more far-reaching results even than that which we have recently witnessed.

To dam up the stream of women's determination is to court disaster; to open to it a free passage is to allow it to flow onwards steadily in its course, potent with good for the human race.

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